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Editor-in-Chief	Chris Youngs
Senior Art Director	Stacy Longstreet
Web Production	Bart Carroll, Steve Winter
Graphic Design	Scott Okumura, Shauna Wolf Narciso
Contributing Authors	Greg Bilsland, Scott Fitzgerald Gray, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Peter Schaefer, Matthew Sernett, James Wyatt
Developers	Mike Mearls, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Peter Schaefer
Editors	Miranda Horner, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
Cover Artist	Steve Argyle
Contributing Artists	Steve Argyle, Nicole Cardiff, Brian Hagan, Amir Salehi, John Stanko, Francis Tsai, James Zhang
Cartographers	Sean Macdonald, Mike Schley, Christopher West
Web Development	Mark A. Jindra
D&D Story Design & Development Manager	Christopher Perkins
Executive Producer, D&D Insider	Ken Troop
Director of RPG R&D	Bill Slavicsek

Special Thanks

Richard Baker, Greg Bilsland, Logan Bonner, Michele Carter, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, Andy Collins, Bruce R. Cordell, Jeremy Crawford, Rob Heinsoo, Peter Lee, Julia Martin, Mike Mearls, Kim Mohan, David Noonan, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Peter Schaefer, Stephen Schubert, Chris Sims, Rodney Thompson, Rob Watkins, James Wyatt

The Coup de Grace

With this editorial, I set out to talk about how cool adventures are in 4th Edition, and how excited I was to be bringing that coolness to the newly redesigned, digital *dungeon*. I wanted to talk about "Heathen" and "Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams," the two big adventures in this issue, as well as the two support articles for *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell*. Instead, I went off to play D&D.

Let me explain. Chris Perkins is not just my boss—he's my DM. Around the office, Chris has a waiting list of people who want into one of the two games he runs. He currently has thirteen players between the two, some of whom have been playing in his game since 1999. Among his players, Chris is acknowledged to be the World's Best DM. That's right, I used caps. Chris is incredibly imaginative, quick on his feet, and always, always thinks of the fun his players are having. He's also incredibly, brutally ruthless. So ruthless, in fact, that we coined a new expression to describe Chris's actions in our last 3.5 campaign: Brutilate.

You see, Chris likes the coup de grace. Okay, so "like" might be strong. But he doesn't shy away from it. I watched him brutally coup de grace not one, but two of Stan!'s characters in the first month of our last campaign. I thought that was brutal. Then this week's session...

Mat Smith plays a goofy, nearly vegetative fighter named Garrot (rhymes with Carrot). Garrot bounds around the battlefield with his greatsword, taking on monsters all by himself. We joke that he thinks "focused fire" is what you do when you stare at a candle flame. We use magnetic markers to indicate conditions affecting our minis in the game. Red is for bloodied. Mat has his own red marker just for Garrot. He spends more time bloodied than he spends conscious.

Early in the campaign, Garrot wandered into an ambush against eight orcs. They rose from hiding and all speared him simultaneously. Garrot dropped. *And that was the surprise round*. Initiative rolls determined that the orcs went first. The first orc's action? Coup de grace. There were other targets in the area, but no, Chris felt that the orcs would make sure Garrot was dead. Afterward, Chris, in his creative fashion, came up with a fantastic story reason for Garrot to return. He's been with us for another five levels.

Then, last night, we fought the treant.

Garrot dropped, and Chris coup de graced him. *Again!* He described the treant, which was on fire, as grinding its flaming foot down onto Garrot's head. Sadly, we were without our cleric (I know, I know—D&D 101) on this particular evening. Our other fighter (Anvar, played by DRAGON alum Jesse Decker), who had multi-classed into warlord, used his daily *healing surge* to save the nigh-pulped Garrot so that he might live to fight another day. We figure that the treant's mistake was that it stepped on Garrot's least vulnerable part: his head.

The experience taught me something about D&D, something about my boss, maybe something about life. Learn to love the coup de grace. Yeah, you'll kill a couple more characters. But few things make a PC hate a villain more than when he'll go out of his way to look them in the eye as he steps on the throat of a poor, unconscious buddy. And when it makes sense in the story (as it did both times Chris used it), go for it. Don't shy away. You'll gain more in the long run from showing your players that the villains play for keeps than you will lose by potentially killing a PC.

I don't know what this means for my next performance review, but I know one thing for sure: When Chris is running the show, never, *ever* roll without your cleric.

Keep on the Shadowfell

Forgotten Realms Conversion

The introductory 4th edition Dungeons & Dragons adventure titled *Keep on the Shadowfell* takes player characters (PCs) from 1st to 3rd levels. A player or Dungeon Master (DM) need not own the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or *Monster Manual* to use the *Keep on the Shadowfell* adventure. The adventure provides all the necessary rules to play, and it is designed to fit into most campaign settings. The material that follows is a guide to placing the adventure into the Forgotten Realms setting. The article includes additional encounters, adaptations to the adventure's people and places, and expanded interactions with nonplayer characters (NPCs). With this guide, a DM can jumpstart his Forgotten Realms campaign before the three core D&D books even arrive on the shelves.

HEROIC
1–10

by Greg Bilsland
illustrations by John Stanko
cartography by Mike Schley

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How to Use This Article

Keep on the Shadowfell intentionally leaves gaps in geography and history, enabling a DM to place the adventure anywhere within his or her campaign. To place *Keep in the Shadowfell* into Faerûn requires this article to provide—and in some cases override—many names, backgrounds, and histories presented in the original adventure. As DM, you must be prepared to adapt the adventure's original text to the information presented here. Read the adventure text in conjunction with this article before running the adventure. You might want to place sticky notes within the adventure's text to help remind yourself of changes as the players run through the adventure.

Preparing for Adventure

Keep on the Shadowfell provides several adventure hooks and an encounter called "Kobold Ambush" to jumpstart the action. You can use its existing encounter and hooks, or you can use the alternate hook and encounter presented here. The alternative beginning allows you to start the adventure in a larger city, or else begin in a safe hamlet in Deepingdale or eastern Cormyr.

You can make multiple hooks available to the party. The adventure hook here (Fleeing Acolyte) allows you to involve all the PCs in the adventure. However, an individual PC might have a specific investment in activities in Winterhaven. Try to tailor the hooks so that each character has a personal, moral, or financial investment in the adventure.

The Setting

In the Forgotten Realms setting, the town of Winterhaven—around which much of the adventure revolves—lies on the East Way between Arabel and Highmoon. The town is located deep in the Thunder Peaks, precariously situated at the edge of Sembia's influence.

The Threat

Long before the arrival of the dracolich Aurgloroasa (known to some as the Sibilant Shade), in the Thunder Peaks, another dragon prowled the mountains. The great wyrm, Shadraxil, was the shadow dragon sire of Aurgloroasa's mother, Shhuusshuru. At the birth of Cormyr in 26 DR, Shadraxil was already a great wyrm and sire to many other dragons, including Shhuusshuru.

As Cormyr extended its power, the nation built fortresses along its frontier, including in the Thunder Peaks. At that time, Shadraxil laired there, and in the year 236 DR, the great wyrm began attacking Cormyr's outposts. Among these forts was the place that was to become Shadowfell Keep.

In response, Cormyr sent a contingent of brave soldiers led by the knight Jerold Keegan. Keegan devised a plan to lure the beast into an arcane trap, where Cormyr's War Wizards managed to bind the wyrm in a prison within the Plane of Shadow.

Shadraxil has been trapped in the prison for twelve centuries, forgotten by most and assumed dead by the few who recall his name.

After centuries of imprisonment, Shadraxil believed he would never escape. However, when Shar folded the Plane of Shadow into the Shadowfell following the Spellplague, the dragon awoke and saw his chance. The Spellplague weakened the protective seal keeping the dragon imprisoned, and so Shadraxil struck a deal with Shar, offering his services in her dark purpose if she could use her agents to free him. After years of excavation and preparation, Shar's servants are finally poised to free Shadraxil, a beast mighty enough to upset the balance of power in the region. Shadraxil's liberation could be the opportunity Netheril and Sembia have coveted in hopes of delivering a killing blow to Cormyr and the Dalelands.

Recent Developments

An underpriest of Shar named Kalarel has infiltrated the nearby town of Winterhaven. His cult operates out of the town, which helps supply Kalarel and his followers, who are hard at work in Shadowfell Keep preparing to unleash the wyrm.

Adventure Summary

The PCs learn that something is amiss in the town of Winterhaven, and they travel there to investigate.

The characters then discover that what seemed only a minor threat is actually part of a greater peril. As characters speak to NPCs in Winterhaven and face Kalarel's agents, they gain clues that help them uncover Kalarel's plans and give them the information necessary to thwart the evil cult's machinations.

Hook: Fleeing Acolyte

The adventurers begin in a village or city near the Thunder Peaks, perhaps sharing a drink together, talking of recent events, or minding their own business. At some point, a group of ruffians enters the tavern and approaches a thin, wiry man sitting in the corner. The man is a resident of Winterhaven and an acolyte of Chauntea. He has been sent by Winterhaven's priestess, Sister Linora. The ruffians corner him and start threatening him. Finally, one draws a dagger and seems about to kill the fellow.

Alternate: The thin, wiry man enters a tavern where the PCs are enjoying a drink. After he spots them, he confesses that he is looking for help to root out an evil cult in his hometown (see Gevarn's Plea on page 8).

Tavern Thugs

Encounter Level 1 (500 XP)

Set Up

The player characters have arrived in the tavern of the Gilded Lady in a city at the base of the Thunder Peaks. If you have no preference for the city in which the characters begin, use Highmoon, the capital of Deepingdale and a city several days east of Winterhaven. The Dalelands consist of free counties full of warm-hearted, independent people.

Set up the tactical map on the game table, and place a miniature of a human man in the area marked "M" on the tactical map. You don't need to place a miniature for the barkeep because he won't participate in the encounter; the tavern is otherwise empty. Allow players to place their character miniatures within the tavern. Once they've selected a location, the action begins.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

4 human thugs (T)
2 human ruffians (R)
1 human mercenary (H)

Once the players place their miniatures, read:

A low fire burns in the hearth of this comfortable common room. The tavern, called the Gilded Lady, is empty of patrons except for a lone human man.

Not long after you sit down with your drinks, a group of tough-looking humans saunters into the tavern to the center of the room. The man in the corner leans back into the shadows of his booth. However, the seven new arrivals spot him. Four move to the front and back doors, while three cross the room, cornering the patron.

At this point, give PCs the opportunity to act. Place miniatures of the human gang according to the positions marked on the tactical map. If the PCs address any members of the group, the human mercenary grunts and tells them to mind their own business.

Unless the PCs attack the men, read:

The leader of the group, a scarred man in chainmail, leans menacingly over the table of the patron.

"You're the one, ain't you?" he asks.

The other man recoils in the booth, mumbling. You hear him manage to stutter, "I–I–d-don't know what you're talking about."

The scarred man seizes the shirt of the tavern patron, fumbles with the man's shirt collar, and yanks out a holy symbol.

At this point, give the PCs another opportunity to act or ask questions.

Perception Check

DC 12 *The holy symbol that the man in the corner wears is made of oak and bears the symbol of a rose. The symbol is that of the goddess Chauntea, a benevolent deity of nature and the harvest.*

Unless the PCs attack, read:

"He's the one," says the scarred man with a sneer. He reaches for his sword and, pulling it out, lunges for the terrified man.

When the PCs rise to the defense of the acolyte of Chauntea–either physically or verbally–the human mercenary shoves the acolyte back into the booth and turns to the PCs, urging his allies, "*Take care of this rabble.*" If the PCs do not come to the acolyte's aid, then the human mercenary kills the man. In that case, engage the PCs in the adventure by having the kobolds from the "Kobold Brigand" encounter in *Keep on the Shadowfell* attack them as they make their way along the East Way through the Thunder Peaks.

4 Human Thugs (T) **Level 1 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 25 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 14; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11; see also *mob rule*
Speed 6

⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+5 vs. AC; 2 damage.

Mob Rule
A human rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human rabble are within 5 squares of it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 11 (+0)
Equipment club
Description Brawny and unshaven, these men looks like the kind of people you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley.

Human Mercenary (M) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14
Speed 5

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the human mercenary's next turn.

↓ **Press the Advantage** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longsword; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and dazed (save ends).

➳ **Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Streetwise +7
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, longsword, crossbow with 20 bolts
Description This tall, muscular human has long hair, a thin mouth, and a pointed nose. He wears chainmail and carries a sword with confidence.

2 Human Ruffians (R) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 37 each; **Bloodied** 18
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12
Speed 6

⊕ **Mace** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.

➳ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 5/10; +7 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

↓ **Dazing Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires mace; +7 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, the target is dazed until the end of the human bandit's next turn, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.

Combat Advantage
The human bandit deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, mace, 4 daggers
Description These ruthless-looking women are armored in leather and wear a smug expression, as if inviting trouble.

Tactics

The human thugs stand guard at the door. However, at the signal from their leader, they charge in at the characters' flanks.

The human mercenary ignores the acolyte and turns his attention on the PCs. Although the mercenaries are working in the service of the cult of Shar, they are practical opponents and flee if a fight appears lost.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Booths: These are planted to the ground and flush with the wall. They are difficult terrain.

Chairs: Chairs do not limit or restrict movement through a square.

Tables: A table is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover from doing so. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on a table. A character can use a standard action to tip over a table, which can then grant cover for a standing creature or superior cover for a prone creature.

Hearth: A low-burning fire provides warmth to the room. The fireplace is built into the wall and does not affect movement.

Hearth Chairs: These provide cover for someone adjacent to it. These also count as difficult terrain.

Rug: A character adjacent to the carpet can use a standard action to make a DC 10 Strength check to pull the carpet up. Any creatures in squares occupied by the carpet must succeed at a DC 15 Acrobatics check or be knocked prone.

Bar: This countertop has a solid front and can provide cover to a standing character or superior cover to a prone character. The bar is difficult terrain.

Treasure: The human gang has 5 gp and 83 sp among them regardless of how many the PCs defeat.

What's Next?

When the fight concludes, the player characters have the opportunity to talk to the terrorized acolyte of Chauntea, who introduces himself as Gevarn. (See Gevarn's Plea on the next page for information about the acolyte and his plight.)

The characters need not worry about the town's authority; the barkeep, who hides behind the bar during the fight, recounts the heroics of the PCs to the town constable, who dismisses the affair.

Gevarn's Plea

This section provides a read-aloud section and a question-and-answer section to help communicate what Gevarn knows. You should feel at liberty to summarize or restructure the conversation as appropriate. When the PCs approach Gevarn, read:

The man huddled in the booth is dressed in plain clothes, indistinguishable from a craftsman or farmer were it not for the holy symbol that he now clutches in white-knuckled hands.

The man's brown hair is in utter disarray, and even now, his thin, wiry frame quivers from the traumatic experience. He looks up at you with wide, blue eyes as you approach and says:

"Th-th-thank you so much for saving me. Chauntea bless you; bless all of you! I thought for sure I was d-d-dead. My name is Gevarn, and I'm an acolyte of Chauntea."

Q: Who were those men?

"Hired street thugs—ruffians sent by the forces of evil to stop me on my mission."

Q: Your mission? Why were those men after you?

"I come from a town called Winterhaven up in the Thunder Peaks. The cleric I serve, Sister Linora, has learned that a cult of Shar has asserted itself in our town. She sent me to go find help, but I'm afraid I'm not well-educated in the ways of the world, and those men must have tracked me down to stop me from finding aid."

Q: What else can you tell us about this cult?

"Sister Linora has learned through her communions with the Great Mother that Shar has turned her dark eyes upon our humble little town. Shar, the Mistress of Night, seeks ever to increase her influence over the world and bring us all to ruin. The Sister instructed me to go find help while she tries to uncover the cult and discover its dark purpose."

Gevarn can provide a basic description of Winterhaven. Having seen the PCs take care of the ruffians, he expresses a desire for their help:

"I thank you all for coming to my aid. Having seen how well you handled yourselves with those thugs, might I beseech you to come to the aid of our beleaguered town? The lord of the town would surely reward you if you manage to find this cult and eliminate it. You would also have the thanks of me, Sister Linora, and the Great Mother if you would lend us your aid."

Getting to Winterhaven

If the PCs heed Gevarn's plea, he accompanies them on the four-day journey to Winterhaven. As the PCs near Winterhaven, they are set upon by kobolds (see the Kobold Brigand encounter from *Keep on the Shadowfell*.) Gevarn seeks refuge during the encounter, and the kobolds do not attack him. Gevarn knows nothing about the creatures, but he's sure the characters can learn more once they reach Winterhaven.

Adapting Winterhaven

The following text replaces the read-aloud text at the beginning of the Winterhaven section in *Keep on the Shadowfell:*

The rutted East Way winds through the Thunder Peaks, eventually coming upon the walled town of Winterhaven. The town is nestled in a forested valley in the midst of the Thunder Peaks. The stone walls appear weathered but still manage to support the defensive palisades.

Small thatched homes stand around Winterhaven, each fronting a small piece of farmland that's been cleared of trees. Beyond the farms, to the west and south, are dark woods, and in all directions rise tall mountain peaks.

Names

Many of the names from the *Keep on the Shadowfell* adventure should be changed to accommodate the Forgotten Realms setting.

Original	New
King's Road	East Way
Cairngorn Peaks	Thunder Peaks
Orcus	Shar
Avandra	Chauntea
Nerath	Cormyr

What's Next?

When the PCs arrive in Winterhaven, Gevarn parts company with them and heads for the temple (area 10). Gevarn invites them to come to the temple and speak with Sister Linora once they are settled. For room and board, he directs them to Wrafton's Inn (area 2).

Important Locations

This article expands on several locations from the published adventure. You should incorporate the original information with the additional descriptions provided here.

Valthrun's Tower: In the original adventure, this five-story tower is rumored to be more than 300

years old. In reality, it is much older. A character succeeding at a DC 25 Arcana check can determine that the tower is enchanted with a ritual allowing it to remain unaffected by the elements. A character succeeding at a DC 20 History or Dungeoneering check can discern that the tower is at least 1,000 years old and dates back to the birth of Cormyr.

The truth is that the spire was built as a watchtower for the fortress, known then as Keegan's Keep. When Keegan's Keep was destroyed (see The Truth of the Keep on page 34), tomes contained in the keep's library were transferred to the tower. They have remained locked away on the lower levels of the tower, where Valthrun doesn't go. Later in the adventure, characters can persuade Valthrun to search these ancient libraries to learn the truth of Shadowfell Keep.

Bairwin's Grand Shoppe: In the original adventure, Bairwin is a world traveler who owns a local general store. However, in this adaptation, Bairwin is Kalarel's underling and the leader of the cultists located in Winterhaven.

Bairwin operates the cult out of a basement in his shop. Bairwin arrived several years ago at the same time as Kalarel, and he has covertly supplied Kalarel with the tools and provisions necessary to excavate Shadowfell Keep. He has also begun recruiting others to his cause.

Important Persons

This article provides new information for playing several NPCs from the original adventure.

Ninaran: Although Bairwin operates the cult in Winterhaven and supplies Kalarel with provisions, it is Ninaran who keeps an eye on things. She has a cabin outside of town, but she spends her evenings in Wrafton's Inn, listening to folks and making sure no one suspects the activity up in the keep. She is also the point of contact for the goblin, Irontooth, who keeps the kobolds in line.

Ninaran is quiet and rarely speaks, but if a PC seeks out conversation, she asks questions without offering anything about herself. When a PC answers a question, she provides a noncommittal *"Ah"* or *"Is that so?"* Ninaran might ask any of the following questions:

"Where are you from?"
"What brings you to Winterhaven?"
"How long are you staying?"
"Do you like Winterhaven?"
"Who have you met so far?"

If characters reveal why they are in Winterhaven, Ninaran expresses casual interest. She then reports everything they say to Kalarel.

If the PCs try to ask Ninaran questions, she is evasive and sticks to the story that she is a simple trapper and hunter. PCs can make DC 14 Insight checks to learn that she is purposefully concealing information about herself.

Bairwin Wildarson: A former resident of Sembia and devotee of Shar, Bairwin seems at first to be merely an eccentric shopkeeper. Among the adventuring gear and provisions in his shop are a variety of odd items, each with a story behind it.

Bairwin takes special interest in dark-seeming characters—warlocks, rogues, or races of typically nongood alignments, such as drow or tieflings. He is interested in finding more potential recruits for his cult and focuses on speaking to any of the aforementioned races or classes.

Thair Coalstriker: This gruff dwarf is in poor humor over the success of Bairwin's shop. He openly complains about the Grand Shoppe's overnight success. He explains that Bairwin arrived in town with a wagon full of junk a few years ago and has since managed to build a shop that seems constantly to acquire more merchandise and expensive items despite having few customers.

Characters who question Thair further learn that Bairwin was at first a frequent customer of Thair's. Bairwin often purchased metal goods like shovels, spades, and wheelbarrows. Thair assumes that Bairwin managed somehow to sell these items at great

profit to others in the area—perhaps dwarves in the nearby hills. Whatever the case, the dwarf smith is bitter over Bairwin's shop's growth.

Sister Linora: This middle-aged, human woman manages the town's temple. She is a quiet, humble, soft-spoken woman except when it comes to Shar. She expresses open frustration at the town's (and particularly Lord Padraig's) unwillingness to recognize the threat. She, like the acolyte, Gevarn, pleads with the PCs to find the cult and provide proof of its existence to the lord and citizens of the town.

Q&A

Q: What do you know about a cult of Shar?
At this point, most people are dismissive of such an idea, laughing it off. Characters can make a DC 15 Streetwise check to learn any or all of the following points of information related to the cult:

✦ The town has no underground caverns or hidden places of which its citizens are aware.

✦ There aren't any new or suspicious folks in town. The newest person is Bairwin, and he arrived several years ago.

✦ The gates are shut at night, and the only people who leave through them are returning to their homes outside town. Farmers, like Eilian the Old, and trappers, like Ninaran, leave shortly after dark.

✦ Most people are more concerned about the kobolds attacking travelers and townspeople than they are about a subversive cult.

✦ If there were a cult, most folks believe it would be outside of town—off in the dragon burial site southwest of town or the old, ruined keep to the northeast. Even so, people find that highly doubtful.

Q: What do you know about Shar?

Sister Linora or Gevarn: *"She is the Mistress of Night, one of the greater gods, and she has only evil in her heart. Out of the primordial chaos, she and her sister, Selûne, created the world. However, unlike her good sister, Shar longs to see the world fall into darkness and evil."*

Bairwin or Ninaran: *"Why do you ask about the Mistress of Night? She has nothing to do with us."*

Anyone else: *"Shar? Well, of course, I know of her, but what does she have to do with me? She's an evil goddess, and Chauntea watches over us here in Winterhaven—that's all I need to know."*

Learning About the Area

Allow characters to make History checks for information related to the Thunder Peaks and Religion checks for knowledge related to Shar.

Thunder Peaks

DC 15: The Thunder Peaks stand on the border between Cormyr and the Dalelands, with Sembia just to the southeast. Since Sembia's expansion, the Thunder Peaks and the road through them has become riddled with dangers.

DC 20: A dracolich known as the Sibilant Shade prowls the peaks. Although dormant in recent years, the dracolich stirs sometimes to prey on particularly treasure-laden caravans that pass through the Thunder Gap along the East Way.

DC 25: When Cormyr absorbed the nations of Esparin and Orva at its founding, it created a series of fortresses in the Thunder Peaks to guard its eastern border. For reasons now lost to time, these keeps failed and Cormyr withdrew its military might to instead guard the lower lands.

Shar, Mistress of Night

DC 15: Shar is a greater goddess who, with her sister Selûne, created Abeir-Toril. She longs to see a desolate world filled only with evil and despair.

DC 20: Following the Spellplague, Shar found it within her power to reshape the Plane of Shadow, which she transformed into the Shadowfell. The Shadowfell is a dark reflection of Toril, where undead and shadowy humanoids stalk the land.

DC 25: Shar exercises a strong influence over Netheril and Sembia, whose denizens worship her openly. Although activity on her behalf outside those nations is limited, small cells do exist that represent her interests. The Monks of the Dark Moon is among the most devoted and formidable groups of followers.

Involving the PCs

Once the PCs are settled in Winterhaven, you have several options for involving them in the adventure. Depending on the hook the characters are following, several things might happen. The section below discusses how to deal with those situations and how to adapt them to the Forgotten Realms setting.

Kobold Ambush

When the PCs leave Winterhaven after first arriving there, they are set upon by a group of kobolds (see the Kobold Ambush encounter from the original adventure). From this encounter the characters normally receive a small dragon figurine with the symbol of Orcus on the bottom. For this adaptation of the adventure, that symbol should instead be Shar's symbol: a black disk with a thin, outer ring of

purple. Characters might then realize that the kobolds are somehow involved with the cult activity.

Dragon Burial Site

In the original adventure, the dragon burial site was indirectly related to Kalarel's machinations. However, in this adaptation, the dragon burial site supplies evidence of Shadowfell Keep's true purpose (see The Truth of the Keep on page 34).

A dragon is buried at the site, but the creature is only a juvenile, which a character can identify with a DC 15 Nature check. A PC succeeding at the check also determines that the bones are those of a shadow dragon, and the site is more than 1,000 years old.

The dragon site is a red herring, a ruse created by long-dead Cormyrian knights to fool everyone into believing Shadraxil was dead instead of sealed within the Shadow Rift. The scheme succeeded until Kalarel learned the truth. The gnome, Agrid, is one of Kalarel's minions and has information that the PCs can use to uncover cult activity in Winterhaven. Unlike many of Kalarel's other servants, Agrid is not devoted to Shar or Kalarel's cause. Kalarel hired him to capture Douven and take over the excavation. When faced with the prospect of death, Agrid offers what information he knows. When bloodied or when only one ally remains, the gnome surrenders and offers the character information in exchange for his life. If the PCs accept, the gnome says:

"Kalarel is the mastermind! He wanted the mirror in that crate over there for some ritual in the keep in the mountains. I don't know why. My contact in the town was a shopkeeper named Bairwin; he was the one who paid me and told me where to find that old fool, Douven."

Once the gnome has offered his information, he tries to cajole the PCs into letting him go, pointing out that he didn't kill Douven, and the PCs would be cruel to kill him. If the PCs insist on bringing Agrid back to town as evidence of the cult activity, he looks for every opportunity to escape.

Once Douven is freed, he also offers an important bit of information to the PCs:

"When I set out to dig, I had thought this was the burial site of the great wyrm, Shadraxil. He was a terrible shadow dragon slain by a group of Cormyrian soldiers led by the knight, Sir Keegan. However, the skeleton of the dragon here is much too small to be that of Shadraxil. I can only wonder what became of the great beast."

Kobold Lair

These encounters remain almost identical to the original encounters. One change is that at his death, Irontooth cries out, "*Mistress of Night, prepare my way.*"

Also, Kalarel's note to Irontooth is identical except for the final line, which should instead read, "Then Winterhaven's people will serve Shar or else feed Shadraxil's empty stomach."

Characters discovering this note might wonder who or what Shadraxil is. Characters making a DC 20 History check recognize the name as being that of a great wyrm supposedly slain by Cormyrians in the third century (DR).

Revelations

If the PCs discover that Bairwin is leading the cult in Winterhaven, they are likely to confront him directly or turn to Lord Padraig. If the PCs go to Bairwin's shop, he greets them pleasantly. When the PCs begin asking probing questions, demonstrating that they know of his involvement, he flees, darting into the backroom where a secret door leads down to an underground chamber. Characters following him trigger the encounter on the next page.

If characters turn to Padraig for action, he demands evidence. Unless the characters manage to present the gnome, he says he will not take action against a member of the town without just cause. In the event the PCs present Agrid, who bemoans his treatment but tells of Bairwin's involvement, then Padraig asks the PCs to help apprehend Bairwin (see the next page).

Cult of Shar

Encounter Level 3 (700 XP)

Set Up

Whether the characters confront Bairwin directly or attempt to apprehend him on behalf of Lord Padraig, the shopkeeper flees into the backroom at the first sign of danger. Characters following him find a secret door ajar in the shop's backroom. The door opens into a narrow stairway that spirals downward into darkness.

Bairwin purposefully leaves the door ajar, hoping to lure the characters after him so he can confront them with his allies. Two sightless reapers stand vigilantly near the entrance to the underground shrine. Two devotees stand near the altar with Bairwin behind them, ready for the attack.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

2 dark servants (D)
2 sightless reapers (R)
Bairwin, cult leader (B)

When the characters enter the area, read:

A pall of dim purple light consumes the room. Candles line the walls, burning with flickering, purple flames. Three rows of pews lead up to an altar. A long carpet with a repeated symbol—a black disk surrounded by a thin purple circle—leads up to the front. Several dark-clad figures stand around the room, poised for action.

Tactics

The creatures occupying this room attempt to engage the PCs near the entrance where the carpet begins. The sightless reapers in particular attempt to block the main corridor, forcing any PCs to move through the pews if they want to reach Bairwin.

The dark servants move through the pews when necessary, striking at the PCs' flanks and then using *shadow shift* and a move action to retreat out of reach.

Bairwin remains in the back, blinding the PCs with *night's veil* so the sightless reapers can gain combat advantage and attempt to keep them in place with *blade of the reaper*. Bairwin and his followers are utterly devoted to Shar and to Kalarel's plan, and they gladly fight to the death.

2 Dark Servants (D) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 125 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 38 each; **Bloodied** 19
AC 16; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12
Speed 6

⨺ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage

⨺ **Shadow's Wrath** (standard; recharge y z) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+5 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 1 damage plus ongoing 5 necrotic damage.

Shadow Shift (minor; at-will)
The dark servant shifts 1 square as a minor action.

Combat Advantage
The dark servant deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Equipment Black robe, short sword
Description Clad in robes of midnight black, these sallow-skinned humans have sunken eyes of pure darkness except for a thin outline of deep purple.

2 Sightless Reapers (R) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +1; blindsight 5
HP 47 each; **Bloodied** 23
AC 19; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Resist 5 necrotic
Speed 6

⨺ **Shadow Scythe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 necrotic damage.

⨺ **Blade of the Reaper** (standard; at will)
+8 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Stalking Shadow (immediate reaction; when an adjacent opponent shifts; at will)
The sightless reaper shifts 1 square.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +7
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment Black robes, scythe
Description These wraith-like figures are cloaked in dark, voluminous robes.

Bairwin, Cult Leader (B) **Level 3 Contoller**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 16; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 17
Speed 6

⨺ **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.

Night's Veil (standard; at-will)
Range 10/20; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

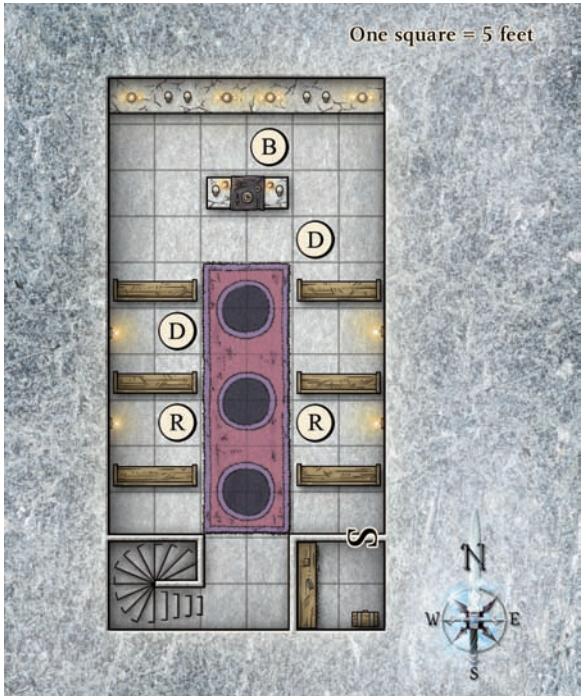
Darkness Unleashed (standard; encounter)
Close burst 2; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d4 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and blinded until the end of Bairwin's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Nature + 8, Religion +7
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 18 (+5)
Equipment Leather armor, quarterstaff
Description This bespectacled, middle-aged man wears lavish garments of purple and black. His eccentricity makes him an unlikely suspect for a cult leader.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light; candles burn with purple flames throughout the room. Although Bairwin and the servants are human, the blessing of Shar has granted them low-light vision. Unless the PCs provide light, the enemies in this room have concealment against characters without low-light vision.

Carpet: This carpet is patterned with the symbol of Shar, and it is a sacred object of the shrine. The carpet grants followers of Shar (Bairwin and his cohorts) a +1 bonus to all defenses. A character can make a DC 15 Arcana check to notice that enemies on the carpet are benefiting from this object. If the object is removed from the shrine, it loses its magical properties.



Pews: These pews are constructed of a dark wood. They are difficult terrain. Also, a character might note with a DC 15 Intelligence check that the pews occupying the room appear capable of accommodating a much larger group than the creatures currently occupying the room. A PC who notes this might realize that the cult has other followers within the town's environs. Although this adventure does not call out any other cult members, you should feel free to include more—perhaps members of the cult seek revenge on the PCs for their actions by attacking them while they sleep in Wrafton's.

Secret Door: The southeastern corner of the room consists of brick and mortar, like the rest of the shrine. However, a PC making a DC 15 Perception check might notice a seam along the wall.

Secret Room: This room contains a set of shelves along the west wall and a small chest that sits along the south side of the room (see Treasure below).

The shelves contain a dozen identical volumes of devotions to Shar. Many of the books are more mundane, including treatises on history that detail the dark goddess's exploits. Several of the tomes, although not actual ritual books, describe rituals of unbinding. A few books describe the history of the Thunder Peaks, and PCs who take the time to peruse the books might (with a DC 15 Perception check) notice a book that speculates that the death of the great shadow dragon, Shadraxil, was in actuality a ruse meant to deter those who would seek to unleash the beast.

These books are part of Kalarel's library, which he has already studied thoroughly. He has left them in Bairwin's keeping now that his ritual is on the verge of completion.

The shelf does contain one ritual book, which a character making the Perception check noted above can identify. The ritual book contains *comprehend languages*.

Also, on the top of the shelves is a correspondence between Kalarel and Bairwin. It reads as follows:

Your latest shipment of supplies should meet the keep's needs until the ritual is finished, which should be any day now. I will send word if we require anything else. Rest assured that you will be rewarded by for your actions on behalf of Shar once Shadraxil is released from his prison.

–Kalarel

Treasure: The chest contains exactly 200 sp and 100 gp.

Lore of the Cult of Shar

A character who makes a Religion check can identify certain features of this encounter's creatures and is aware of the following information:

DC 15: Worship of Shar is predominantly located in Netheril and Sembia, yet small pockets of devotees exist throughout Faerûn. These cells are usually independent and act according to what they believe fulfills Shar's will.

DC 20: Servants of Shar begin to physically transform as their faith allows the goddess's malign influence to bleed into their souls. Over time, humanoid devotees gain vision that lets them penetrate darkness, and they also acquire the powers to unleash necrotic energy upon their adversaries.

DC 25: The most devoted followers of Shar often undergo a transformation that warps their body, leaving them emaciated echoes of their former self. These people become creatures of shadow, less powerful than shades but nonetheless formidable.

Shadowfell Keep

Once the characters have exhausted their options in town and have figured out the danger that Kalarel and his cohorts represent, then they are likely to head toward the keep. However, the characters might learn a little bit more of the story through the efforts of Valthrun, an NPC.

The Truth of the Keep

When Valthrun learns of the suspicious activities in Shadowfell Keep and around Winterhaven, he grows alarmed and tells the characters that he must consult the historical texts locked away on the second and third story of his tower. If the PCs allow him a few hours to search the tomes, he can reveal to them the secret of Shadowfell Keep—a secret that has remained guarded for centuries. The following text, which Valthrun communicates to the PCs, replaces Valthrun's information from the Questions Answered section in the original adventure:

"Shadowfell Keep, as folks call it now, was not always known by that name. It seems that this name arose only in the past century from people's fear of the plane through which the dead travel. Not so long ago, yet beyond the memory of most, the keep was known as Keegan's Keep.

"Stories tell of how the lord of Keegan's Keep, Sir Jerold Keegan, became a crazed lunatic and slew his family and friends, forever cursing the place. However, the truth of the story is much more tragic.

"Sir Keegan was a renowned hunter of dragons. Thus, when the great wyrm, Shadraxil, a shadow dragon of particularly ill temperament, began to plague Cormyr, it fell to Keegan to come up with a way to defeat the beast.

"The knight lured the beast to the keep, and there, he managed with sword and sorcery to occupy the creature long enough to perform a ritual to trap it away in a place of shadow. That would have been the end of the story were it not for the power of Shadraxil.

"Incensed by his defeat, the wyrm poured all of his malice into revenge against the knight who trapped him. Such was the dragon's power that even from beyond the Shadow Rift, he was able to deceive Keegan into believing his friends and family were conspiring against him. Eventually, the knight's mind snapped.

"The author of the historical treatises speculates that he suffered paranoid delusions, for Keegan went on a rampage through the keep, killing his wife and comrades before eventually a grievous wound drove him to flee into the keep's crypts. It's not known what happened to him after that.

"Cormyr's leaders, fearing that Shadraxil might continue to wreak havoc upon those stationed at the keep, ordered the place destroyed and its secrets hidden. They slew a juvenile shadow dragon and created a false burial site, all in an effort to conceal the truth—that Shadraxil still lives, waiting just beyond the rift for an opportunity to have vengeance upon those who did him wrong so very long ago.

"Whatever activity is occurring at the keep, it can surely mean ill for Winterhaven and those of nearby lands. Please, will you do what you can to help?"

Running the Adapted Shadowfell Keep

The changes to adapt Shadowfell Keep for the Forgotten Realms are detailed in this section. Many of the names from *Keep on the Shadowfell* should be changed to accommodate the alternate setting.

Keep Overview

1. Guard Room: No change.

2. Torture Chamber: The goblin prisoner, Splug, can provide information about the cult that the PCs might have missed.

3. Excavation Area: The holy symbol found in this room is a symbol of Selûne, not Bahamut.

4. Balgron's Chambers: A character trying to force Balgron to reveal the pass phrase can make a DC 20 Religion check to find out that "All life fails in the dark" is a devotion to Shar.

5. Crypt of Shadows: No change.

6. The Hidden Armory: No change.

7. The Skeletal Legion: The ceiling of the eastern section of this room is covered with a mural. When the characters enter this section, read the following instead of the original adventure text:

Silvery-white light from above suffuses this wide section of the crypt. A dome depicts a radiant sky with a set of vivid silver and blue eyes gazing down. The eyes are surrounded by six equidistant silver points of light with a single larger point of light above the eyes. Surrounding this radiant image are dark tiles.

Altars inscribed with elaborate script stand on either side of the area. Relief images of soldiers in plate armor on their knees in prayer appear on the walls behind each altar.

The text from *Keep on the Shadowfell* related to the altar and the dragon statues also varies. The script on the altars is in Common, and both altars read:

In the light, life thrives, perseveres, and endures against the darkness. Our Lady of Silver, give us strength to stand against the darkness and face the night with vigilance and bravery.

The secret compartment in the southern altar contains a number of moonstone pendants equal to the number of party members. Aside from their appearance, these behave in the same way as the dragon statues described in the original adventure.

8. Sir Keegan's Tomb: Keegan's responses to the following questions should be adapted to be consistent with the Truth of the Shadowfell section.

Q: Who are you?
"I am Sir Keegan. I was the lord of this keep. It was my charge to keep the Shadow Rift sealed and prevent Shadraxil from breaking free and unleashing a reign of terror upon Cormyr."

Q: What happened here?
"Shadraxil's power was so great that the wyrm was able to extend his influence from beyond his shadow prison and consume me with madness. I was possessed! In a rage, I slew my wife and then moved through the keep, killing my comrades one by one even as they stood stunned. I became a murderous fiend!"

Q: Why are you down here? What happened next?
The text is identical except for the name of the king, which should be King Tharyann.

Q: What can we do to help?
The text is identical except that Bahamut should be Selûne.

9. The Maze of Caves: No change.
10. Kruthik Nest: No change.
11. The Water Cave: No change.

Walk of the Dead: See the encounter on the following pages.

12–14. Hobgoblin Rooms: At your option, you can play the hobgoblins as cohorts of Kalarel, or you can replace some of the hobgoblins with the cultists from the Cult of Shar encounter on page 12. If you choose to include some cultists, replace the hobgoblin soldiers with sightless wraiths and replace the archer or warcaster with dark servants. You should keep track of adjustments in the encounter level so you do not create an encounter that is too easy or too difficult for the PCs.

The only other change of note occurs in the Warchief's Council Room, where the map showing an attack on Winterhaven should not include any undead.

15. Tunnels of the Cube: No change.
16. Trapped Chamber: No change.
17. Ghoul Warren: No change.

18. Cathedral of Shadow: This is a subtemple devoted to Shar, not Orcus. Replacing all mention of "Orcus" with "Shar" should be adequate to adapt the encounter. At your option, you can also alter the description of the underpriest, giving him a tattoo of Shar's symbol.

19. The Shadow Rift: All mention of "Orcus" should be changed to "Shar." Use the following read-aloud text in place of the original encounter's text:

You descend into a nightmare. Crimson streams spill from above and form a pool of blood in the center of the chamber. A foreboding purple light illuminates the room.

A yawning, black portal dominates the northern wall of the chamber. Huge talonlike shapes strain against the portal, as if the darkness were a thin film restraining some beast. A set of blazing runes has been inscribed on the floor before the portal.

Opposite the portal stands a massive black statue of a beautiful woman clad in robes. The statue's form seems as dark as midnight on a starless night.

To the east, steps lead to a platform where a small pit is flanked by two small demon statues.

To the west, another set of steps ascends to an altar of bone flanked by wide pillars. A human clad in heavy armor and carrying a skull-capped rod stands behind the altar. His eyes are closed, and a book rests open before him. He chants a low, droning prayer to Shar, the Mistress of Night.

The players might note that on the poster map that accompanies the adventure, the large statue depicts a demon rather than Shar. You can reveal the illustration at the start of this article to more accurately express what the scene looks like.

The rest of the encounter operates in the same way as the original adventure. The thing in the portal is in fact Shadraxil, straining against the Shadow Rift. For added effect—and to drive the point home to the players—you might describe how upon the death of Kalarel, a deafening, draconic roar emanates from the other side of the rift before slowly fading away.

The dragon statues described in *Keep on the Shadowfell's* final encounter are instead the moonstone pendants that characters might have recovered from the altar in the Skeletal Legion encounter. These pendants otherwise have the same effect.

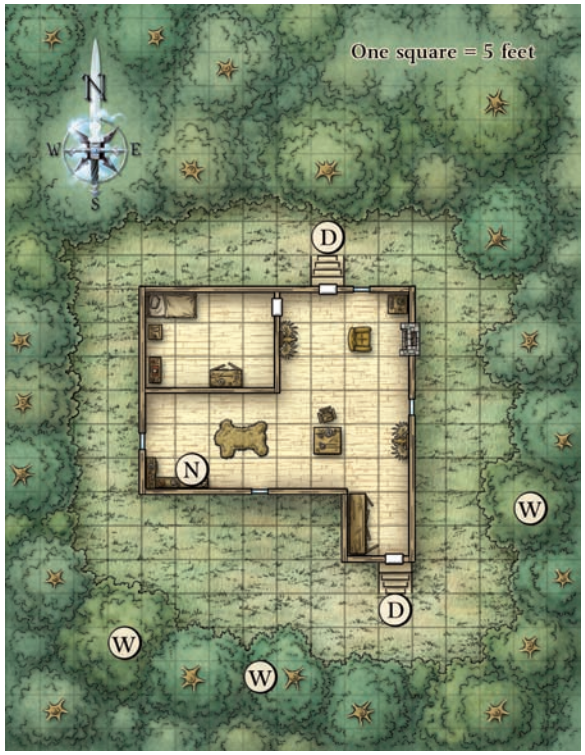
Ninaran's Cabin

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

Set Up

The way this encounter is triggered depends on how the PCs handle their interaction with Ninaran. If the PCs don't confront Ninaran until the Walk of the Dead interlude encounter, then this encounter is likely to follow immediately afterward.

This encounter assumes that Ninaran flees from the PCs and heads for her cabin to make a stand. Ninaran flees from the graveyard (either through the crack in the wall in the large mausoleum, through the front gate, or over the fence) when she is bloodied. She then runs toward a nearby section of forest. PCs who immediately chase after her can follow, but her speed 7 means she likely keeps a lead on them. PCs who are not able to immediately chase her can learn from members of the town where her cabin is located. When they go there, the encounter is triggered.



The PCs might instead become suspicious of Ninaran before the graveyard encounter. If PCs seek her out at home, the guard drakes stand poised to attack, growling and alerting her of the characters' presence. Ninaran first tries to dismiss the PCs peaceably; if they do not leave, the encounter is triggered.

If PCs covertly follow Ninaran to her cabin or else attempt to break into the cabin, the encounter is triggered when the PCs enter the clearing and the guard drakes become aware of the character and attack.

Regardless of how the characters initiate this encounter, Ninaran should begin at full hit points, even if the characters have already dealt damage to her.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

2 guard drakes (D)
3 shadow wolves (W)
Ninaran, elf archer (N)

When the PCs approach the clearing, read:

Alders and ash trees stand around a large cabin in a grassy clearing. Brush fills the area between the trees but, otherwise, the area is clear of foliage. The cabin is made of long tree trunks, interrupted only by a few windows. In front of the cabin's door stand two scaled beasts, each about the size of a dog. They growl menacingly at you.

The PCs emerge from the woods in the squares south of the guard drakes. If they attempt to move anywhere beyond the line of trees, the creatures attack.

Passive Perception Check

DC 18 *Canine forms hide in the brush along the line of trees.*

DC 24 *A dark form moves within the cabin.*

3 Shadow Wolves		**Level 3 Lurker**
Medium shadow beast		XP 150 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision	
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19		
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14		
Speed 8		
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage,		
Combat Advantage		
If the shadow wolf has combat advantage against its target, it deals an extra 1d6 damage and blinds the target (save ends) on a successful melee attack.		
Fade to Night (immediate interrupt, when the shadow wolf is the target of a melee attack; at will)		
The shadow wolf gains combat advantage against the attacker and makes a melee basic attack against the attacker. The shadow wolf then shifts 1 square.		
Shadow Stalk		
If a shadow wolf moves at least 3 squares from its starting position, or if it does not attack this turn, it gains concealment until the end of its next turn.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** –	
Skills Stealth +8		
Str 13 (+2)	**Dex** 14 (+3)	**Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 2 (-3)	**Cha** 10 (+1)
Description Created by Shar's followers out of dark energy channeled from the Shadowfell, these wolves are pure black. As they move, the shadows seem to rise about them.		

Ninaran, Elf Archer (N)	Level 4 Artillery
Medium fey humanoid	XP 175

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
Group Awareness aura 5; nonelf allies in the aura gain a +1 racial bonus to Perception checks.
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15
Speed 7; see also *wild step*

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

➶ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage; see also *archer's mobility*.

Archer's Mobility
If the elf archer moves at least 4 squares from its original position, it gains a +2 bonus to ranged attacks until the start of its next turn.

Elven Accuracy (free; encounter)
An elf can reroll an attack roll. It must use the second roll, even if it's lower.

Wild Step
An elf ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven
Skills Nature +12, Stealth +12

Str 13 (+2)	**Dex** 20 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 12 (+2)	**Cha** 11 (+1)

Equipment leather armor, short sword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows
Description This pale elf has dark hair and a deadly purpose in her keen eyes.

2 Guard Drakes (D)	Level 2 Brute
Small natural beast (reptile)	XP 125

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12
Immune fear (while within 2 squares of an ally)
Speed 6

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, or 1d10 + 9 damage while within 2 squares of an ally.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5)	**Int** 3 (-3)	**Cha** 12 (+2)

Description This four-legged reptile appears strong and powerfully built.

Tactics

When the characters enter the clearing, the guard drakes move forward and attack, attempting to bar them from approaching the cabin. The wolves then move in to attack the characters from their flanks.

The night wolves attempt to gain combat advantage, negotiating their positions with the guard drakes. They dart in, attempting to strike and blind characters before retreating either by shifting and moving away, gaining concealment from *shadow stalk*, or by using *fade to night*. The wolves keep moving—out of melee range when possible.

From the cabin, Ninaran shoots at the PCs, taking advantage of the cover provided by the windows. She keeps both of the doors locked, delaying any PC from entering and giving her time to position herself for melee or allowing time to escape.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Daylight (unless PCs are traveling by night).

Bedroom: Ninaran's bedroom contains a small altar devoted to Shar, a nightstand, a bed, and a wardrobe. Squares containing these furnishings count as difficult terrain. The nightstand and wardrobe contain only mundane belongings.

Bookshelf: Ninaran possesses a number of books, most of which are religious treatises on Shar and the Shadowfell.

Closet: A small closet stands at the entryway to the cabin. It does not impede movement, but a creature can open the closet with a minor action and move into the square, preventing line of effect and line of sight if the closet door is closed. The closet contains fur coats, cloaks, and other winter gear.

Door: These wooden doors are locked. A character can unlock the door with a DC 20 Thievery check or can break down the door with a DC 16 Strength check.

Forest: Thick foliage grows on the edge of the clearing. These areas do not provide cover or concealment but are considered difficult terrain.

Table and Chairs: The tables and chairs are difficult terrain. A table can be tipped over as a move action and can then provide cover to a standing creature or superior cover to a prone creature.

Windows: The windows can provide cover. A pair of shutters can be opened or closed on the windows as a minor action. A creature can climb through an open window as a move action, but doing so elicits an opportunity attack from an opponent adjacent to the window.

Treasure: If the characters take time to search Ninaran's cabin, they discover little of value. The only exception is a pair of silver candlesticks on her altar (worth 50 sp each). If the characters capture or kill Ninaran, the PCs also discover the treasure described in The Dead Walk encounter. If the characters confront Ninaran before the graveyard encounter can occur, then they discover Kalarel's letter (described in The Dead Walk encounter) on her bookshelf. In this case, the graveyard encounter does not occur, and the characters inadvertently save the lives of ten of Winterhaven's citizens. ⚔

About the Author
Greg Bilsland is a game editor and contract writer at Wizards of the Coast. His writing credits include the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide* and several D&D Insider articles. When he's not working, he spends much of his free time writing speculative fiction in one of Seattle's many coffee shops.

Keep on the Shadowfell

Eberron Conversion

by Stephen Radney-MacFarland

illustrations by Francis Tsai

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THIS MONTH you can play the new edition of the Dungeons & Dragons game. And thanks to the release of the first 4th edition adventure, *H1 Keep on the Shadowfell*, you can play the game before the *Player's Handbook* hits store shelves. To run the game, all you need is *Keep on the Shadowfell* and a set of dice; the adventure provides all the rules you need to play.

This article is a commentary on *Keep on the Shadowfell* and requires use of the adventure. The conversion suggestions allow you to set *Keep on the Shadowfell* in the Eberron campaign setting. The article infuses the adventure with the pulp feeling that differentiates Eberron from other Dungeons & Dragons campaigns.

The article first addresses general changes to the adventure and then describes specific alterations. It answers the big questions first: Where in Eberron does this adventure take place? Who are the movers and the shakers? How do I run a 4th edition Eberron game? With those questions answered, the article addresses the adventure's particulars. It provides guidance for bringing Eberron details into the adventure and offers the intrigue and excitement that the setting is renowned for.

Before running *Keep on the Shadowfell* in Eberron, read both the adventure and this article in full. Of course, it's not always possible to find time before game night. If you can't read the article and adventure in their entirety, review only the parts the characters are likely to experience. Each section contains an overview of major changes, making it easy to implement adaptations on the fly.

The Big Questions

Although Eberron is a D&D world, it does not share all the aspects of the world as detailed in the upcoming *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Eberron has its own conventions, its own history, and a fixed geography. Thus, *Keep on the Shadowfell* requires finessing to truly become a part of the Eberron world.

Where in Khorvaire is Winterhaven?

The village of Winterhaven is located in northeastern Karrnath, about 200 miles west of the Ironroot Mountains. Sitting on the southwest edge of the Icetop Mountains—called the Cairngorm Peaks by locals—Winterhaven is a lonely town in the remote highlands of the Gardbury Downs.

Although the Icetop region is frigid through most of the year, Winterhaven remains temperate due to a mixture of volcanic springs and the sheltering heights of the Icetop mountains, which grant the region respite from the harsh winds and blizzards.

The adventure assumes the PCs start in the town of Lakeside and travel northwest along the King's Road toward Winterhaven.

What is the Shadowfell?

Eberron has a Shadowfell, just as the core world of the D&D game does. Also called the Plane of Shadow, the Shadowfell encompasses both Dolurrh, the Realm of the Dead, and a region of shadows and despair called Mabar, the Endless Night. Once every 20 years, on the nights before the new moon that precedes the winter solstice, Mabar draws near to Eberron and its presence is felt more strongly: shadows grow colder, undead and creatures of shadow emerge to stalk the night, and the wards guarding rifts between the world and the Shadowfell weaken. These dark nights are commonly known as the Winterhaunt, and they begin just as the adventure starts.

A Cult of Orcus in Eberron?

Orcus, like other demons, was sealed in Khyber by the couatls and dragons, yet not all of his champions met the same fate. Hundreds of years ago during the time of Galifar I, a powerful exarch of Orcus named Doresain was sealed away in the Shadowfell after he tried to raise an undead army to free Orcus. This prison is secure except during the Winterhaunt. For a few days, the seals keeping Doresain in his shadowy tomb weaken, and he and the foul forces he has amassed through the centuries try to break free.

The Other Interests

Although the cult of Orcus seems to be the antagonist in the adventure, events in Eberron are rarely as they appear to be. When a nefarious organization or secret society is hatching a plan, another one, two, or three groups are lurking somewhere in the shadows, making plans of their own.

The Blood of Vol: Although Kalarel purports to be a disciple of Orcus to his goblin and kobold minions, in reality he is an agent of the Blood of Vol. His masters in the Crimson Monastery sent him to unseal the rift to Mabar. Kalarel hopes to gain Doresain as an ally to acquire power for his organization and increase his own position within the cult.

Cult of the Dragon Below: The goblins and kobolds have worshiped Orcus for centuries, believing him to be an aspect of the Dragon Below. The cult's persistence over the decades and the role of the strange and terrifying dolgrims and dolgaunts suggest a beholder or daelkyr hiding somewhere in the shadows.

Church of the Silver Flame: Although this religion is not as powerful in Karrnath as it is in neighboring Thrane, active agents of the faith do reside in the area. Prompted by an augury from the Voice of the Silver Flame in Thrane, the church might send heroes to confront the threat and protect the people of Winterhaven.

King Kaius III of Karrnath: Even before he restricted the influence of the Blood of Vol, King Kaius made it his business to spy on the cult and respond to their activities. Although the mummy cleric, Malevanor, has tried to conceal Kalarel's mission from the king's spies, Kaius has learned that the cult has an interest in Winterhaven. The monarch has already dispatched one agent to disrupt the cult's activities, and he might send more.

Characters for the Eberron Setting

Keep on the Shadowfell comes with five ready-to-play characters. Each character is suitable for the Eberron setting. For players who want a classic Eberron race, two pre-generated characters are available on **D&D Insider**—a warforged paladin and a longtooth shifter cleric. Swap these character in or use them as extra characters if you're running a larger game group.

After the release of the core books in June, you'll find a section titled "Racial Traits" on page 276 of the *Monster Manual*. In that section you'll find the racial traits for doppelgangers (changelings), gnomes, longtooth and razorclaw shifters, and warforged—all you need to create a cast of characters for the world of Eberron.

CONVERSIONS

In this section we get down to brass tacks—you'll get specifics for modifying the adventure, encounter-by-encounter and section-by-section. Each encounter or section provides a rundown of modifications, if any. The title of each section indicates the page number of the original text. All changes target the *Adventure Book*. The *Player's Book* is unaltered. The entire "The Adventure Begins" and "DM's Quickstart Rules" sections (pages 5–15) are not covered here because they do not relate to the events in the adventure.

The Setting (Page 2)

Orcus created the rift to Mabar during the Age of Demons as a tool for bringing undead into the world. After Orcus was banished to Khyber, the rift was then sealed by the dragons and couatls. Millennia later, during the time of Karrn the Conqueror—the founder of what would become Karrnath—the rift was almost breached through the actions of the exarch, Doresain. However, the heroic efforts of Sir Keegan and his paladins of Dol Dorn kept the rift sealed and also bound Doresain in the Shadowfell, where he has remained for 1,000 years.

The Threat (Pages 2-3)

The goblin and kobold tribes in the area have always venerated a figure they call the Winged Demon, which they believe is an aspect of the Dragon Below. Though they have called on this being for protection and power, no goblin or kobold shaman knows that the Winged Demon is in fact Orcus. When Kalarel showed up, his power and his knowledge of their god gave him the leverage to gain dominion over the tribes. Now, kobolds and goblins work together in the service of Kalarel, believing he is the Winged Demon's prophet. With their help, Kalarel could soon free Doresain, releasing the powerful exarch into the world and giving Orcus the foothold he needs to escape Khyber and enter the world as well.

Recent Developments (Page 3)

Under the orders of the High Priest of Vol, Kalarel has come to Winterhaven to open the rift to Mabar during the Winterhaunt. Armed with a powerful ritual capable of unsealing the rift, Kalarel has spent the last few months consolidating his power, coordinating his spies, and collecting the last components necessary for the ritual. Now, Kalarel is ready to open the rift, he need only wait for the final component of the ritual.

Adventure Summary (Page 3)

The summary presented in the adventure is a good overview of the action. Only the details have changed.

Preparing for the Adventure (Page 4)

Of the hooks presented in the adventure, only the first one, "Missing Mentor," has a conversion element. The only change to this hook is the fact that Douven Staul, unbeknownst to the PCs and even his wife, is an agent of King Kaius III.

Replace the other two adventure hooks with the following hooks.

Hook: Mysterious Mission

Eberron is a setting filled with skullduggery and plots. Use this hook to add an element of pulp and intrigue to the game.

In one of the civilized corners of Karrnath, such as Korth, or Karrlakton, or maybe even Lakeside, a mysterious woman approaches the PCs. In hushed tones she asks if they are interested in serving their king. If the PCs answer affirmatively, she ushers them into some secluded corner of a tavern and tells them the following.

"Travel to the city of Winterhaven near the Icetop Mountains. Once there, look for an old man in Wrafton's Inn. Start a conversation with him and ask him about the local area. Eventually he'll ask if you'd like him to draw a map of the area. Respond with this exact phrase: 'Do the local birds need maps to know which way the wind blows.' He'll respond to this pass phrase with, 'not on a fair day, but they may when darkness falls.' Then give him a copper coin that features the portrait of King Kaius. He'll then give you a mission."

She will say no more about the mission, except that secrecy is important. The man she's referring to is Eilian the Old, one of the NPCs the characters will encounter in Winterhaven's Wrafton's Inn (see page 19 of the adventure and the conversion notes below). As for the coin, getting one is not a problem. Most coins in Karrnath have the portrait of King Kaius.

Hook: For the Silver Flame

This hook is designed for a member of the group devoted to the Silver Flame, a lawful good religion sworn to protect the innocent against forces of supernatural evil.

In this hook, Theoban Flamerule, a Karrn agent of the Silver Flame, enlists the PC or PCs on a mission. Theoban has learned that the minions of the dread Crimson Monastery and the agents of King Kaius are converging on the town of Winterhaven. According to auguries from the Voice of the Silver Flame, the activity involves demons, undead, and a ritual that hopes to unleash both upon Eberron. Although the faith of the Silver Flame is weak in Karrnath, time is of the essence, and Theoban hopes the PCs can save the folk of Winterhaven from the darkness that threatens them.

On the Road: Kobold Brigands (Pages 16-17)

There is no change in the encounter, but replace the "What's Next?" section with the following.

After the battle, the PCs hear crying from the woods just beyond the road. There, they find an elf woman dressed in peasant's clothes tied up next to a tree. At her feet is a turned-over basket and a scattering of purple flowers.

When the PCs come into view, she says:
"Oh, thank the Sovereign Host! I thought I was dead or worse. My name is Delphina Moongem, and I'm a flower merchant from Winterhaven. I was out here picking violets when I came across the kobolds. I would be most grateful if you untied me and escorted me back home.

Delphina is not what she seems—she's actually a doppelganger (sometimes called a changeling by the folk of Khorvaire) named Sil. An agent of Kalarel, she murdered the real Delphina months ago and has maintained her guise ever since. She serves her master by acting as a messenger to the kobold tribe and by keeping her eye out for strangers traveling into the area. She was visiting the kobolds to deliver a message, but when she heard the PCs approach, she set the draconic humanoids to ambush the travelers. Sil knows that whether the kobolds succeed or fail, she can do her master's bidding by feigning distress and learning about the travelers.

Although it's impossible for the PCs to determine that the elf maid is a doppelganger, other skill checks might provide the PCs with clues for later in the adventure.

Minor Recurring Villain

The doppelganger, Sil, is a smart and cunning villain with a part to play later in the adventure.

You want to create suspicion in your players' minds, but don't go overboard. The people of Winterhaven vouch for "Delphina" without hesitation (with the exception of Eilian the Old, see "Interlude One" below), and they reveal that she has been a part of the community for as long as anyone can remember. Only Eilian finds her current behavior of any concern.

If the PCs somehow discover Delphina's true nature early in the adventure, you'll need to make adjustments to **A4: The Burial Site.**

DC 15 Nature: A character notices that the flowers in the basket aren't violets, they're irises. If the PCs point this out to Delphina, she blames the mistake on the stress from the kobold attack.

DC 15 Perception: A character notices that her wrists are not chafed from the rope. If the PCs question this, she tells them that she was only recently captured and was too scared to struggle.

DC 20 Insight: A character determines that she is being dishonest about her situation. If pressed for answers, Delphina gets upset and pretends to cry.

Interlude One: Arriving In Winterhaven (Pages 19-23)

Winterhaven has few changes from the published adventure. This section guides you through the specific adaptations to the town and its personages.

Winterhaven is a remote and isolated city. It maintained a garrison and housed siege equipment during the Last War, but since the Treaty of Thronehold, the city has embraced peace. In fact, the city has perhaps become too peaceful, for its Lord has neglected to enforce military training and maintain a ready militia, which is mandatory in Karrnath. As a result, the town is almost defenseless.

Winterhaven Location Changes

8. Warrior Guild (Militia Hall): In this version of Winterhaven, the Warrior Guild is the Militia Hall. Although it serves a similar purpose, the military training is supposed to be mandatory, not a way in which citizens of the villagers can earn extra pay. The Militia Hall is rundown and has seen little use in recent years.

10. Temple: This stone structure is a temple to the Sovereign Host—a collection of nine deities worshiped by most of Karrnath's population. All reference to Avandra should be replaced with the Sovereign Host. Otherwise, the temple is identical to the one presented in the adventure book.

12. Winterhaven Siege Supplies: The siege equipment here remains from the Last War, and it is in such a state of disrepair that it's practically useless.

Winterhaven NPC Changes

Delphina Moongem: As revealed earlier, Delphina was murdered and replaced by a doppelganger named Sil. None but Eilian the Old are suspicious of Delphina.

Eilian the Old: Unbeknownst to the town's residents, Eilian the Old is an agent of King Kaius III. Placed here during the Last War as a punishment for a minor act of cowardice, the old soldier and spy is happy to have stumbled upon a real threat that has attracted the king's notice. He hopes that he can find favor with his monarch and maybe even replace the inept Lord Padraig as lord of the town. If you used the Mysterious Mission hook, Eilian the Old is the PCs' contact in Winterhaven (see sidebar). Even if the PCs aren't using the Mysterious Mission hook, the discovery of Douven Staul's fate might lead them to speak with Eilian and learn of his allegiances (see Interlude 2: Shadows of the Keep, below).

Valthrun the Prescient: In this version of the adventure, Valthrun has a dark side. Through research and divinations, he's discovered Kalarel's true allegiances, and he hopes to find a way to use that information to his advantage—namely, earning the respect of the Blood of Vol and everlasting life as an undead.

Ninaran: Delphina Moongem is not Kalarel's only shapechanging spy. The stoic elf hunter is actually a dusk hag in Kalarel's employ. Ninaran and Sil operate independently. Ninaran knows of Sil's presence in Winterhaven, but Sil remains ignorant of Ninaran's mission and connection to Kalarel.

Douven Staul: Unknown to the PCs (even a PC he once mentored), Douven Staul is an agent of King Kaius III. Staul was dispatched to Winterhaven after Eilian the Old sent a message describing the strange happenings afoot in the village. However, Staul has been missing for several days.

Mysterious Mission Hook

If you used this hook, Eilian the Old is the PCs' contact in Winterhaven. Once the PCs successfully communicate the key phrase to Eilian, he drops pretenses and tells characters the following.

"Dark times are ahead. Strange things are happening in the hills around this village. You are not the first agents sent on this mission. My last contact, Douven Staul, missed our last meeting, and I have grown worried. He discovered much of what is going on, but I don't know the bulk of it; Staul did not keep me fully in his confidence. I do know that he was searching the south for a piece of a dragon that is supposed to be buried there. He believed that something called the 'third sinister rib' was important, though he did not say why. That was the last information I received before he went searching for the dragon and disappeared.

Oh, and by the way, beware the elf, Delphina. I have known her for many years, and she is acting strange of late. She forgets things and seems distracted. I think she might be in league with the dark powers at work here."

Eilian finishes by asking the characters to investigate Staul's disappearance and to report back to him. He can provide instructions to the dragon burial site where Staul intended to go.

Questions Answered

The text here replaces some of the answers to questions in the adventure's original text.

Q: What can you tell me about an ancient keep in the area?

Valthrun the Prescient: *"The keep was built and abandoned long before the reign of King Kaius I, probably around the time of Karrn the Conqueror. Its location seems to be of little strategic importance. Maybe, long ago, dangerous creatures roamed the Cairngorms in greater numbers. Obviously, the keep outlived its usefulness. It's been a ruin for as long as anyone can remember. But now you've whetted my curiosity. I'll research the matter, and the next time you see me here, I'll know more."*

Like in the original adventure, Valthrun doesn't reveal all he knows about the keep. He wants to see what the PCs do with the information and how he can manipulate the situation. For months, he has been investigating the strange occurrences at the keep, and he knows about Kalarel's and the Blood of Vol's presence. Valthrun is an old man who fears death, so he's biding his time until an opportunity comes when he can serve the Blood of Vol and hopefully earn the boon of undeath.

Delphina Moongem: *"I have traveled that area many times searching for rare flowers, and I can tell you that the ruins are empty. If you are looking for adventure, you'll find none there. Instead, you should do something about all the kobolds causing trouble in the area."*

Unlike in the original adventure, Delphina tries to dissuade the PCs from investigating the keep. She would rather see the adventurers waste their time hunting kobolds than investigate the keep and jeopardize her master's plans.

Q: Is there any unusual cult activity in the area?

Salvana Wrafton: Her response is the same as in the adventure's original text except that she says Winterhaven's residents follow the teachings of the Sovereign Host, not Avandra.

Eilian the Old (if the PCs are in his confidence): *"Douven thought so. He believes the goblins and kobolds here worship a demon and that they are being organized by a new master. He believes the group is pursuing some evil purpose under the ruined keep in the mountains."*

Eilian the Old (if the PCs are not in his confidence): His response is the same as in the adventure text except that he refers to the Blood of Vol instead of the Raven Queen.

A1: Kobold Ambush

(Pages 24-25)

The only change to this encounter is to the necklace on the wyrmpriest, which instead is shaped as a symbol of the Cult of the Dragon Below. Like the dragon figurine in the original text, the bottom of the necklace's pendant is etched with the outline of a skull with ram horns.

DC 10 Religion: A PC identifies the trinket as a symbol of the Cults of the Dragon below—a diverse group of sects that revere the power of the subterranean realms, often including the worship of demons.

DC 25 Arcana: Orcus is obscure enough that a character must succeed at this check to connect the etching with the demon lord of the undead.

A2: Kobold Lair, Outside

(Pages 26-27)

No change to this encounter.

A3: Kobold Lair, Inside

(Pages 28-29)

The kobolds are not led by a goblin named Irontooth, but instead are commanded by a dolgrim named Ironteeth. Replace Irontooth with Ironteeth in the second wave of this encounter, and replace the readaloud text with the following.

When the second wave attacks, read:
A harsh, bleating horn heralds the appearance of a goblin-like creature. Pale for a goblin, this four-armed creature has a large head and no neck, giving it a hunch-backed form. The creature has two mouths, each of which sports a jagged set of iron teeth. Around him, kobolds scurry as if afraid to get close. A great tattoo depicting a skeletal ram's head marks this creature's deformed face. This abomination wields a pair of battleaxes, each hefted by two of its strong, sinewy arms.

Ironteeth, throws himself into the fray with wild abandoned, moving about to support the kobolds with a frenzy of axe swipes and the occasional snap of his dangerous iron teeth.

Upon being struck a death blow, Ironteeth's twin mouths cry out in a snarling and disquieting harmony, "Kalarel and Lord Orcus, prepare my way!"

Dolgrims

Dolgrims are a servitor race of the daelkyr. Like many daelkyr servitors, they are gruesome sculptures of flesh. They were created by crushing a pair of goblins into one foul and dangerous creature.

Dolgrims stand taller than most goblins, and they weigh more due to their two extra arms and enlarged head. A dolgrim's skin is pale and oily, but it is usually decorated with macabre images.

Although Dolgrims were created by the lords of Xoriat to obey daelkyr and dolgaunts, they are also found in the services of the Cults of the Dragon Below and other perverse organizations. They make excellent minions, taking to their tasks with feverish enthusiasm and loyalty.

Ironteeth (I)	**Level 3 Elite Skirmisher**
Small aberrant humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15	
Saving Throw +2 (+4 vs. effects with the fear or charm keywords)	
Speed 6; see also *dolgrim tactics*	
Action Point 1	
⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.	
⸸ **Double Swing** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires two battleaxes; make a melee basic attack against two separate targets; Ironteeth can shift once before each attack.	
⸸ **Iron Bite** (free, when Ironteeth hits a bloodied enemy; at-will)	
+6 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 3 damage.	
Dolgrim Tactics (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will)	
The dolgrim shifts 1 square.	
Dual Consciousness	
Ironteeth gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against effects with the fear or charm keywords.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Draconic, Goblin
Skills Athletics +9	
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+0)

A4: The Burial Site (Pages 30-31)
Encounter Level 2 (624 XP)

In the Eberron version of this encounter, the excavation is not led by the gnome, Agrid, but rather, it's led by Sil in the guise of Delphina Moongem.

In this encounter, the PCs learn that Delphina is not the damsel she appears to be. She has killed Douven Staul—not knocked him out, as in the original adventure—and has uncovered the third sinister rib, the last component Kalarel needs to complete the ritual that will open the rift to the Shadowfell.

On the brink of success, Sil is interrupted by the PCs' arrival. In the form of Delphina, she attempts to lure them into attack position using tactics similar to Agrid in the adventure's original text. Replace Agrid's stat block with the stat block below. Sil uses the same tactics as Agrid.

Sil, Doppelganger Sneak (S)	**Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)	XP 150
Initiative +6	**Senses Perception** +2
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.	
⸸ **Shapeshifter Feint** (move; at-will)	
The doppelganger shifts 3 then attacks an adjacent target; +6 vs. Reflex; the doppelganger gains combat advantage against the target until the end of the doppelganger's next turn.	
Combat Advantage	
The doppelganger sneak deals an extra 1d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**	
A doppelganger can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +10, Insight +9, Stealth +9	
Str 11 (+1)	**Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 15 (+3)
Equipment short sword	

Change Shape (Polymorph)

The creature can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of another creature. The type and size of the new form is specified in the creature's entry.

The creature retains it statistics in the new form, and its clothing, armor, and possessions do not change

and are not absorbed into the new form. The new form lasts until the creature changes it or until death.

If the creature is capable of assuming the form of a unique individual, other creatures can attempt an Insight check (opposed by the monster's Bluff check) to pierce the disguise. The creature must have seen the individual it is imitating and gains a +20 bonus to its Bluff check.

Features of the Area

Shallow Grave: Douven's body lies in a shallow grave at the edge of the encounter area. A character searching the area after the encounter can find it without difficulty.

Treasure: Instead of the ancient mirror described in the original adventure, the relic from the dragon burial site is the third sinister rib. Sil carries this item wrapped in silk, along with a note from Kalarel that reads, "*Be very careful to extract the third rib from the sinister side. I want the entire thing; I don't know how much I'll need to perform the ritual.*" It's signed "*-K*" and written in the same hand as the note found on Ironteeth, the dolgrim in the Kobold Lair encounter.

Interlude 2: Shadows of the Keep (Page 33)

The nervousness that the town's residents feel is due to the Winterhaunt and the proximity of the Shadowfell to the world. Only Valthrun knows the source.

Questions Answered

Q: Valthrun, what else can you tell us about the ruined keep?

Valthrun the Prescient: "*My books and scrolls tell me the keep was built in the time of Karrn the Conqueror, the founder of Karrnath. The keep was not built to watch for marauders, though, it was constructed over a rift to the Shadowfell—known also as Mabar—a place of death and shadows!*

"*According to my research, Orcus, a demon lord of undead, was sealed away in Khyber, but about a thousand years ago, one of his exarchs tried to free him. The exarch's name was Doresain, and he sought to breach the rift and summon from Mabar an army of undead. He might have succeeded were it not for the valiant actions of a few knights. These paladins of Dol Dorn managed to seal Doresain away in the very rift from which he had hoped to raise his army.*

Over time, the keep's true purpose was forgotten, and it was abandoned. However, the rift remained, and now someone may be trying to open it. The Winterhaunt—a time when the Shadowfell nears our world—is upon us, and the seals on the rift will likely weaken.

"*I think there is evil afoot there, and you should check it out. I'll continue to research this subject in the mean time.*"

Q: We recovered the third sinister rib from the dragon burial site, and according to a note we found, it is important in a ritual—what should we do with it?

Valthrun the Prescient: "*The third sinister rib? I have no idea what that could mean, but I should take a look at it. I might be able to figure out what ritual is being performed. Leave it with me and I will perform some tests to determine what its use is.*"

Again, Valthrun knows more than he lets on. He wants the PCs to scout the ruins and report back. As for the rib, he knows that if it's important in the ritual, he might use it to gain Kalarel's favor. If the PCs give it to him, he uses a magical messenger to send the rib to Kalarel as a token of good will to secure an alliance. Alternatively, he might keep the rib until he can accompany the PCs into the keep, at which point he can personally deliver the item (see Optional Encounter: Valthrun Joins the Party).

The Ruins of Shadowfell Keep (pages 34-35)

The history of Shadowfell Keep and the plight of Sir Keegan are similar in this conversion; only a few details have changed. The keep was built in the time of Karrn the Conqueror and was guarded by paladins of Dol Dorn. After Doresain was sealed in Mabar, he reached out from beyond the rift to take vengeance upon Sir Keegan. He possessed the knight, forcing him to slay his family and friends. Eventually, Keegan regained control of himself, but by then, it was too late.

Shadowfell Keep: Level One (pages 36-59)

The first level of Shadowfell Keep has few changes.

Area 1: Goblin Guard Room - No change.

Area 2: Torture Chamber - No change.

Area 3: Excavation Site - No change.

Area 4: Chieftain's Lair - No change.

Area 5: Crypt of Shadows - No change.

Area 6: Hidden Armory - No change.

Area 7: Skeletal Legion - The challenge of the encounter does not change, but the skeletal knights wear the symbol of Dol Dorn (a sword lying diagonally over a red shield). Dol Dorn is a member of the Sovereign Host and is the god of Strength and Steel. The altars and prayer are keyed to Dol Dorn instead of Bahamut, and the altars contain holy symbols of Dol Dorn instead of statuettes of dragons.

Area 8: Sir Keegan's Tomb - The only change to this encounter is Sir Keegan's background. Once the lord of Shadowfell Keep, Keegan murdered his friends and family due to the influence of Doresain. In penance for his crimes, Keegan locked himself in the keep's crypts. He remains there to this day, watching over the rift to Mabar.

Area 9: The Maze of Caves - No change.

Area 10: Kruthik Lair - No change.

Area 11: The Water Cave - No change.

Interlude Three: The Dead Walk (pages 60-61)

The only change to this encounter is the nature of Ninaran. Instead of an elf, she is a dusk hag who has taken elf form. In the fight, she uses a strange, curved bow designed so that she can pull it with dangerous effect even after she transforms into her true form (which she does at the beginning of the battle).

Ninaran, Dusk Hag Archer (N) **Level 3 Artillery**
Medium fey humanoid (shapechanger) XP 175

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14
Speed 6

Claws (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

Nightmare Touch (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
+8 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 psychic damage, slide the target 1 and the target is dazed until the end of Ninaran's next turn.

Insightful Arrow (minor; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longbow; ranged 20/40; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target grants combat advantage to Ninaran until the end of the encounter.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
A dusk hag can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant
Skills Arcana +7, Bluff +8, Insight +9, Perception +9
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)

Dusk Hag

Lesser hags blessed with a form of second sight, dusk hags are gnarled shapechangers that are as mysterious as they are hideous. They are capricious in their endeavors, always seeming to chase after their goals for mysterious reasons. They are respected for their wisdom of future events, which they sometimes impart to those foolish or brave enough to heed their words.

Ninaran's Last Words

Dusk hags are creatures of prophecy. If the PCs have not yet gained the aid of Sir Keegan, then before Ninaran dies, she relays a prophetic ritual to the PCs in one of two ways. First, the PC or PCs who were affected by the nightmare touch receive the following vision during their next extended rest.

Douven Staul walks up to you. He is not alive and shambles toward you like a zombie. He says to you in a raspy and hollow voice, "You are doomed to fail unless you gain the aid of the knight who doomed himself through failure."

Alternatively, Ninaran could relay the following message as her dying words.

"You are doomed to fail unless you gain the aid of the knight who doomed himself through failure."

What's Next?

Valthrun tells the PCs that he believes he can repair the rift, but he must accompany the characters into the lower section of the dungeon.

Valthrun is lying, however, and he has no desire to stop the ritual. In fact, he might have already

delivered the last component of the ritual to Kalarel depending on whether the PCs gave him the rib.

If Valthrun knows that the PCs have the third sinister rib, but they have not yet given it to him, then he tries to persuade them to hand the item over. He explains that it is an important piece of the ritual, and he needs it to close the rift. Character might detect that he has ulterior motives with a DC 17 Insight check. If characters question him further, he becomes defensive and then refuses to help them. If the characters still won't hand over the rib, he lets them go to the keep alone, secretly following them and then striking when they are vulnerable.

If the PCs allow Valthrun to accompany them, see the optional encounter below.

Optional Encounter: Valthrun Joins the Party

(New Encounter)

Encounter Level 1 (400 XP)

While traveling with the PCs, Valthrun does little to aid them in combat. He pretends to be a simple researcher and sage with little magical power.

The wizard waits patiently to betray the party. He looks for an opportunity when the PCs are weakened by a powerful foe or waits until the final encounter. He then attacks the PCs with all his arcane might.

The timing of the encounter is up to you, but it should challenge the PCs without overwhelming them. After all, the PCs are the heroes of the tale and should have a chance to thwart the bad guys. Add Valthrun to an encounter when his betrayal has the most impact and excitement. This will usually occur during the adventure's last encounter.

Valthrun	**Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 400
Initiative +3 **Senses Perception** +4	
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19	
Speed 6	
Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 damage.	
Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force, Implement**	
Ranged 20; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.	
Icy Rays (standard; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Implement**	
Ranged 10; 2 creatures; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Valthrun's next turn.	
Fireball (standard; daily) ✦ **Fire, Implement**	
Burst 3 within 20 squares; +10 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 4 fire damage. Miss: Half damage.	
Staff of Defense (immediate interrupt, when Valthrun would be hit by an attack; encounter)	
Valthrun gains a +1 bonus to all defenses until the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common	
Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +7, Religion +11	
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)	
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 19 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+2)	

Shadowfell Keep: Level Two (pages 62-80)

Like the upper level of the keep's dungeons, this level has few changes.

Area 12: Hobgoblin Guard Room - No change.
Area 13: Hobgoblin Barracks - No change.
Area 14: Warchief's Council Room - No change.
Area 15: Corridors of the Cube - No change.
Area 16: Chambers of Statues - No change.
Area 17: Ghoul Warren - No change.
Area 18: Cathedral of Shadow - No change.

Area 19: The Shadow Rift - Replace the skeletal warriors with dolgaunt warriors (see below). They use the same tactics as the skeletal warriors in the adventure text. Their strategies only differ if they are tasked with retrieving the third sinister rib (see the sidebar).

In this encounter, the symbols of Dol Dorn found in Area 7: Skeletal Legion have the same effect as the dragon statues described in the original adventure.

2 Dolgaunt Warriors		**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium aberrant humanoid		XP 150 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +2; blindsight 20	
Harassing Tentacles aura 1; any creature in the aura marked by the dolgaunt warrior is also immobilized (save ends).		
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22		
AC 19; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 13		
Speed 6		
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)		
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is marked until the end of this creature's next turn.		
⸸ **Tentacle Lash** (standard; at-will)		
Marked target only; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends) and is marked.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common	
Skills Athletics +8, Acrobatics +10		
Str 15 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+5)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 10 (+1)	**Cha** 11 (+1)

Dolgaunt

Dolgaunts have empty eye sockets and resemble pale, emaciated hobgoblins. A pair of tentacles reaches out from behind a Dolgaunt's back and flails menacingly about it. Dolgaunts are blind, but they have other senses that allow them to perceive the creatures around them. They are servitors of the daelkyr and are greatly feared for their cunning, their ruthlessness, and their ability to drain the fluids from creatures through their tentacles.

Blindsight

A monster with blindsight can perceive creatures and objects within the stated number of squares, making Perception checks as normal. The creature automatically fails Perception checks to notice things outside of the range of its blindsight.

A monster with blindsight suffers no ill effects while blinded.

The Third Sinister Rib

If the PCs kept the third sinister rib with them, then Kalarel can sense its presence as the PCs enter the final encounter. Desperate to acquire this last component, he sends his dolgaunts to retrieve it. The dolgaunt's can forego doing ongoing damage and marking an enemy with tentacle lash to instead grab the item from a PC. They then attempt to pass the item to their master, who hastily tries to complete the ritual. This can be an opportunity for Kalarel to mock the PCs for foolishly bringing him the item, or you can have the rib actually be a catalyst for some event in the encounter. Perhaps once Kalarel attains the rib, The Thing in the Portal starts to tear through the rift. Or perhaps the Evil Magic Circle on the floor begins to glow and generate the effect described in the encounter. Whatever you decide, the rib can be a pivotal item in the final encounter.

If the PCs left the component somewhere else, then one of Kalarel's agents was able to obtain it. The priest can chide the PCs for their carelessness, making his eventual defeat all-the-more satisfying for the players.

New Eberron Characters

If you would like to give your players the chance to play a character that feels like something unique to Eberron, check out the "Playing Warforged" article in this month's issue of *Dragon* (#364).

Alternatively, we've built a couple new characters—a warforged paladin and a longtooth shifter cleric—up on **D&D Insider** for your use. Feel free to download the character sheets and offer them as pregenerated options for your players to use. ⚔

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when Stephen Radney-MacFarland came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to was his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D, where he doesn't create the traps...he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches roleplaying game design classes at the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

HEROIC
1-10

Heathen

by Scott Fitzgerald Gray

illustrations by Steve Argyle, Brian Hagan, and Amir Salehi

cartography by Sean Macdonald

THE SEARCH for a missing paladin takes the PCs deep into the heart of a frontier torn apart by cult wars—and face to face with an ancient evil.

"Heathen" is a 4th-edition Dungeons & Dragons adventure for five characters of 5th level. The adventure takes place in remote frontier territory that can easily be placed into any campaign setting.

Adventure Background

For five years, the Hand of Naarash has extended its dark hold over the borderlands. This cult of Bane was born in the Moonsfall Mountains, spreading across the frontiers of fallen Nerath and into settled lands. The cult's death squads target isolated settlements for "cleansing"—the folk of the frontier given the choice of joining the Hand or accepting the salvation of death.

As the cult's power has grown, a martial order called the Light of the Sun has risen to fight against it. A year before, the order sent a team deep across the frontier to strike at the cult's hidden heart—an ancient temple known as the Pillars of Night. This group was led by the paladin Jaryn, a noble warrior and veteran of countless cult campaigns.

He and his compatriots were never seen by the order again.

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Now, a chance meeting with Light of the Sun members sees the PCs recruited to retrace Jaryn's journey across the borderlands—and to uncover the secret of his dark fate.

Adventure Synopsis

In an isolated frontier settlement, the PCs intervene when a Hand of Naarash death squad attacks a group of refugees fleeing the frontier. Upon meeting members of the Light of the Sun, the PCs are recruited for a journey into cult territory. Their quest: Retrace the route of the paladin Jaryn as he sought the temple known as the Pillars of Night.

A skill challenge sees the PCs make their way through the isolated villages of the frontier, seeking information on Jaryn's group and the road they sought. The Black March is a secret trail leading north to the Pillars of Night, its location a closely guarded secret. The PCs hear word of Jaryn's passage, the deaths of three of his party, and his oath to destroy a cult warlord named Larkazh. Then a confrontation with a Hand death squad reveals that the cult is smuggling weapons and armor across the frontier—the Hand of Naarash is building an army in the north. The PCs discover that the Hand is aware of their pursuit of Jaryn when a group of doppelganger assassins attempts to end the party's quest.

Setting out on the dangerous Black March, the PCs come to the isolated citadel of Adakmi. Alerted to dangers on the road ahead, they chart a new course up the white-water rivers of the Moonsfall Mountains, confronting another of the cult's death squads in a burning village. From the survivors come more clues indicating that Jaryn passed this way. Then the PCs are attacked by a tiefling darkblade—Jaryn's last surviving companion, now under the control of the cult.

The PCs arrive at the Pillars of Night—the ruins of a sprawling giant-built temple reclaimed by the Hand of Naarash. The temple complex is one part frontier city and one part military enclave—its people dedicated to the cult's dark mission. But when the PCs undertake a skill challenge to subtly infiltrate the cultists and determine Jaryn's fate, they discover that the paladin did make it to the Pillars of Night—and that he remains here, the new leader of the Hand of Naarash and the architect of the cult's future.

In the inner temple, the PCs fight their way through magical defenses and the lurking horrors of the past. They then defeat Jaryn's personal guard before facing the paladin himself. Jaryn has been corrupted by the latent evil of a demonic presence named Naarash, bound to a stone that the giants discovered and named the Eye of Naarash. The demon's evil destroyed the giants, and Naarash waited, biding its time until the temple ruins were discovered by hobgoblins five years ago. Having slain the hobgoblin who led the cult, Jaryn has rebuilt the Hand in his own broken image.

Whether the PCs fight Jaryn or manage to break the hold of Naarash's evil, they must face the demon in the end—a final battle to determine the fate of the cult and the borderlands.

The old adage that the journey matters as much as the destination is the guiding principle of "Heathen." The adventure is an excursion into the unknown for the PCs, but the ultimate shape of that journey is up to you and the players. For a party that wishes to focus on combat and skill challenges, you can shortcut the narrative and travel time to play "Heathen" as a traditional adventure whose encounters are separated by geography.

However, "Heathen" can also be used as a framework for a mini-campaign. You can expand the social encounters, throw more wandering monsters and cult patrols onto the Black March, or add additional skill challenges from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If the party levels up once or twice during an expanded adventure arc, adjusting the levels of later encounters is easy. See "Advanced Encounters" in "Chapter 4: Building Encounters" of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Adventure Hooks

The Light of the Sun's plea for the PCs to seek Jaryn can be given more weight by introducing a previous connection between the party and the paladin's quest. The war-torn frontier might border on the homeland of one of the PCs, or the Hand of Naarash could be known for specific brutality against certain PC races. Any paladin or cleric of Pelor in the party might feel a strong sense of obligation to take up Jaryn's cause.

Alternatively, the Light of the Sun can be reworked as an order dedicated to any good or lawful good deity, or it could be an order of a specific race or culture dedicated to overthrowing the cult's evil.

The Frontier

The borderlands are an untamed expanse of wilderness and hardscrabble villages far from the centers of civilization. The PCs are passing through this frontier or might have arrived here in the aftermath of their previous adventure. The town they stop in resembles any other frontier settlement. However, a recent influx of refugees has swollen its population to the bursting point.

As the PCs arrive in town or go about their previously established business, read:

What was once a grassy common in the center of town has become a field of makeshift tents. The number of refugees is hard to count, more arriving each day to replace those picking up to head east for civilized lands. The exiles are a mix of races and cultures, but they share a common purpose according to the villagers you overhear discussing them—all are fleeing the predation of some frontier cult.

F1. A Timely Rescue

While making their way to or from their inn one evening, the PCs note a disturbance that turns ugly.

The rain started that morning and shows no sign of letting up; the track through the center of town has turned to mire. As you approach the common, a shout rings out through the downpour. Sunrods light the refugee camp where a tent is pulled down. Five figures storm through the adjacent shelters as people scatter before them. You hear a child scream as a mace is raised.

Tactical Encounter: "A Timely Rescue" (page 35).

Development

The town militia shows up when the fight is done. Beneath travel-stained cloaks, three of the cultists wear loose-fitting gray tunics with the symbol of Bane painted across the chest. The other two have the symbol painted directly onto their chainmail.

If the PCs allowed any cultists to survive, they obtain no useful information from them. They are recent converts who know nothing of the Pillars of Night or the Black March, and they do not wear the Naarash talisman of the temple cultists (see the sidebar on page 34).

Treasure: The PCs can claim 10 gp and a *potion of healing* carried by the mage.

The Light of the Sun

As the refugees put their camp back together, another group appears to lend a hand.

The newcomers are well-armed, all in gray cloaks set with the sun of Pelor. When the last of the injured has been taken care of, a tall human woman approaches, greeting you deferentially.

"Well met," she says. "And thanks to you for a timely intervention. We have been hard after these cult butchers for three days now. Had you not been here, our arrival would have come too late."

Emesha is a cleric of Pelor. She and her companions are members of an order called the Light of the Sun. (Any PCs who worship Pelor recognize the name.)

"These are cultists of the Hand of Naarash, a sect of Bane that spreads like plague. The Hand seeks converts in the isolated settlements, meeting resistance with steel and fire."

Emesha and the others stay with the shaken refugees. However, as the PCs take their leave, the cleric approaches again:

"Friends, if you will be here in the morning, I would speak with you. It concerns a matter of some importance and a favor that we might humbly beg in Pelor's name."

Emesha agrees to meet the PCs at a time and place of their choosing.

F2. Mission to the Borderlands

The next day, Emesha makes an impassioned plea for the party's aid:

"Our order fights the Hand of Naarash at every turn, but still the cult's strength grows. Our hope a year ago was that striking at the heart of the cult would grant us an advantage. That hope has been dashed until now—should you decide to aid us. We need a group willing to seek a paladin named Jaryn, lost across the frontier. Your actions last night, putting yourselves in danger to defend others, makes me hopeful that you might undertake this quest."

Any Insight check shows that Emesha speaks the truth. In response to specific questions regarding the mission, she replies with the following:

Who is Jaryn? "Jaryn is a stalwart of our faith and a veteran of countless campaigns against the cult. He and a group loyal to him undertook a mission a year ago that would have struck a mortal blow at the heart of Naarash."

What was Jaryn's mission? "While our order defends the villages of the frontier, Jaryn and four companions sought to take the battle to the heart of the cult. Naarash's faithful are based in a great temple in the Moonsfall Mountains. The Pillars of Night, they call it. Jaryn swore to break the cult by destroying its leaders."

What happened to Jaryn and his group? "Our last contact with Jaryn was a *sending* ritual six months ago that placed him deep in the borderlands at the head of a trail he called the Black March. We have had no further word."

Who else was in Jaryn's party? "Four faithful of Pelor—Andressa and Annika, sister-clerics of our order; the fighter Kelma; and Dajani, a tiefling sworn to Pelor's cause."

Who is Naarash? What is the Hand of Naarash? "Naarash is said to be a hobgoblin prophet

of Bane before the fall of Nerath, but no history speaks of that name. The Hand of Naarash arose as a hobgoblin cult five years past, though it now counts all of the borderlands' races among its members."

What activities does the cult engage in? "They prey on the most isolated frontier villages for converts and spoils. Townsfolk are given the choice of joining the Hand or accepting the salvation of death."

Why do you need our help? "Our own operatives are too well-known among the cultists. Two groups have tried already to follow Jaryn's path. Neither returned. A capable party unknown to the cult might succeed where others have failed."

Development

Jaryn's group made its way west through the settled frontier, then north along the Black March. Emesha can sketch out a map that will see the party through the first stage of the journey. She gives the PCs a description of Jaryn, noting a prominent scar on his left cheek earned in battle with a hobgoblin war chief.

Emesha and her group carry little wealth, but she can cobble together a 100-gp stipend for the party as the PCs prepare for their expedition.

Quest XP: The mission to seek Jaryn is a major quest worth 200 XP for each PC. The outcome of that quest is likely to be different from what the PCs expect.

F3. The Frontier

Having accepted Emesha's mission and equipped themselves for a long journey, the PCs set out.

With a last word of thanks, Emesha and her compatriots take their leave of you as they escort a group of refugees to larger settlements south and east. Your destination is west, and the frontier road is all but empty as you head out.

Skill Challenge

Level 5, Difficulty 5 (1,000 XP)

In this initial stage of the adventure, the PCs follow Jaryn's trail across the borderlands. Endurance and Nature checks in this skill challenge occur once per day. Other checks occur only when the PCs arrive in an inhabited village, as determined by the results of their Nature checks.

Setup: The PCs seek out frontier villages, searching for information on Jaryn, the cult, and the location of the Black March.

Primary Skills: Endurance, Nature, Streetwise, Perception.

Endurance (DC 18): The frontier is an inhospitable expanse of scrub and grassland that offers little in the way of food or shelter. Each day that the party spends traveling, its members must make a group Endurance check. Low DC Penalty: The group takes a –2 penalty to its next Endurance check (each character takes that penalty).

Nature (DC 22): In the absence of trade roads, the PCs must use Nature to seek out the intermittent foot and cart paths crisscrossing the wilderness.

Streetwise (DC 26): While in a village, the PCs talk with the locals. However, the folk of the frontier are reluctant to speak of the Hand of Naarash to strangers, and only one Streetwise check can be made per PC. High DC Bonus: The party gains one piece of information (see below).

Perception (DC 22): While in a village, one of the PCs eschews conversation in favor of poking around town or eavesdropping. In addition to victory, the party gains one piece of information (see below).

Other Skills: Diplomacy

Diplomacy (DC 22): The folk of the frontier are unused to strangers, and it takes time to earn their trust. Each day they remain in a town, the PCs can make a single Diplomacy check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. On a failed check, the townsfolk reject the party's attempts at sociability; the PCs take a –2 penalty to subsequent Streetwise and Perception checks and cannot make further Diplomacy checks in that town. On a successful check, the PCs gain the trust of the townsfolk, granting a +2 bonus to their next Streetwise or Perception check.

Each of the villages the PCs pass through can be similarly described:

The intermittent trails you follow eventually join a faint track. Ahead, scrubland gives way to fields dotted with farmhouses. However, even before you reach the village, you feel the eyes on you. Through shuttered windows, the villagers watch your approach with dark suspicion.

Settlements of this size have no inns or taverns, and the PCs must seek shelter in private homes and farms. The folk of the frontier are uniformly suspicious of strangers but downright fearful of the Hand of Naarash. However, a DC 18 Diplomacy check and 1 sp each procures a night's shelter for the PCs (and their mounts, if applicable).

Success: From the final village, the PCs are given directions to the Black March. See "Village Showdown" below.

Failure: The PCs' inability to gain the complete trust of the folk of the frontier sees them stymied in their efforts to find the Black March.

Rumors on the Road

The reward for success in this skill challenge is the location of the Black March. However, each Streetwise or Perception check can shed light on Jaryn's quest. Information can be given out in the order presented, or you can decide what to reveal based on the specific information the PCs tell you they are seeking.

F4. Village Showdown

In one of the villages the PCs stop in as they make their way across the frontier, they become targets of a Hand of Naarash death squad. Incorporate this encounter into the preceding skill challenge when the PCs are one check away from either victory or defeat.

The last three settlements you passed have been burned out, human and hobgoblin bodies scattered in the ash. Just before dusk, you find a settlement still standing. The track meets up with a wide stream ahead, green fields to both sides. As you approach, a figure on horseback rides out from the nearest farmhouse. An older human man hails you, one hand resting on the longsword at his hip.

Perren Auldwyl is a widower and elder of the town of Erstlin. Guessing that the PCs are seeking a place to stay the night, he offers the use of his well-kept farmhouse. While the PCs rest, he prepares a meal, steadfastly keeping any conversation steered toward mundane topics. If the party chooses to seek lodging elsewhere, Auldwyl shows up later unannounced, forcing any other townsfolk to keep quiet. Either way, the following exchange occurs as soon as the PCs attempt to ask about the Black March or the cult:

"Not the first time I've heard such questions from outsiders," Auldwyl says. "And I'll tell you straight what I told them—Erstlin don't need no would-be heroes making trouble. Best you take your questions and head back to your precious cities at first light."

Whether the PCs argue or prepare to leave, read:

From outside comes the sound of hoofbeats through the dark night. Auldwyl sprints to a window, carefully peering through the shutters. "Fools!" he hisses as he turns back. "You don't know what you've done."

Tactical Encounter: "Village Showdown" (page 36).

Erstlin's Secret

Beneath their cloaks, the cultists wear gray tunics marked with the symbol of Bane. The rough appearance of their clothing is a stark contrast to their well-made arms and armor, and to the *magic rod* the warcaster carries. Any search of the cultists reveals that all wear identical silver talismans (see the sidebar).

RUMORS

1. "I saw this paladin of yours. He and his group were headed west. I told him all he'd find west was cult trouble. He was smiling as they rode off."
2. "Used to be you'd only ever see the Hand of Naarash out west and north. These past months, their banners have been flying in every corner of the frontier."
3. "The Hand's enforcers were always after silver and gold, but that's changed. More of their death squads are on the hunt for arms and magic now."
4. "Used to be, the cult's hobgoblins were thugs that a strong threat and a pitchfork could drive off. Now, they fight like soldiers."
5. "I remember the paladin and his group. Hobgoblins hit us two days before, black-haired butchers. Your folk healed up our wounded, helped us give rites to the rest, then headed west."
6. "We were hit by the Hand twice in the past year. Your Jaryn and his group came through, told us not to worry about the Hand no more. Cult came back just the same."
7. "I never saw him, but I heard about him from three different villages northwest. Jaryn and his band of Pelor faithful were going after a Hand chieftain named Larkazh—foulest hobgoblin Hell ever spawned."
8. "Heard about a fight between the paladin and a force of Hand members come down from the north to hunt him. Didn't see it, but the crows were thick over the hills."
9. "That fight was eight months back. Naught there but hobgoblin bones now and three cairns on the field, each capstone painted with Pelor's sun."
10. "I talked to a trapper just come down from the Harsmad Hills. Said he saw nothing but burned villages there. Said, too, that he met a lone knight and a tiefling on foot seven months back, heading into the hills as he was heading out."
11. "I heard a story from a refugee family out of the Harsmad that met a holy knight of Pelor. Said he looked like a wild man—mud and brambles in his hair, a string of hobgoblin teeth around his neck."
12. "Caravan of refugees came through four months past on its way south Refugees said they met a knight heading the other direction. Shared a campsite with him. Said he preached the faith of Pelor. When they woke up, he was gone. But there by the fire was his gear—armor, shield, and all. He took his sword and waterskin and naught else, heading straight for the heart of the hills and the Moonsfall Mountains beyond."

Clothes Make the Cultist

All the cultists the PCs face wear the symbol of Bane—either painted in black on a loose-fitting gray tunic (worn over leather armor if applicable), or painted directly onto heavier armor. The PCs can collect these tunics or paint Bane's symbol on their own armor to disguise themselves when they reach the Pillars of Night.

Auldwyl recovers consciousness with or without the PCs' assistance. Though he is grateful for their handling of the cultists, he remains angry.

"Unless you're planning to stick around to take on the group that comes looking for this one, you ain't done us no favors." Auldwyl pulls aside the curtain to the bedroom, showing the crates stacked there. He opens one, revealing a brace of black-fletched arrows. Another crate contains longswords, and a third is packed with steel helmets.

"The Hand is running weapons north," the old man says quietly. "Erstlin's a stop-off point, last town short of the wilds. We give their smugglers free run of the town, the Hand leaves us alone."

This group of hobgoblins arrived a day before to take delivery of the arms and armor. Auldwyl met the PCs in an attempt to keep them out of sight. He knows that the cultists' destination is the Black March, but he does not know its location, nor do the cultists carry maps.

Treasure: The townsfolk are happy to let the PCs have the *magic rod +2*, but the weapons and armor are claimed by Auldwyl for Erstlin's defense.

Completing the Skill Challenge

With the cultists defeated, the townsfolk of Erstlin emerge from their houses and converge around the battle site. Have the PCs make their final Streetwise or Perception check in the skill challenge from encounter F3. For having stood against the cultists, the PCs gain a +2 bonus to the check.

On a successful check, read:

At the edge of the crowd, a young woman steps forward. "Name's Shandra. Hobgoblins killed my pa when they first came. Said it was a warning. I followed them, meant to take revenge but I couldn't keep up. But I saw where they went. I can make you a map for finding their Black March."

If the PCs are unsuccessful in the skill challenge, Auldwyl and the other townsfolk can give them only a rough bearing on the route the cultists take when they leave town. The encounter "Blades in the Night" gives the PCs a second chance to find the Black March.

The PCs can purchase supplies in Erstlin for their continuing journey, including up to ten days trail rations each.

F5. Blades in the Night

The lands beyond Erstlin turn to hilled forest, offering better shelter and obviating the need for Endurance checks. Three days out, the party is confronted by doppelganger agents of the Hand.

As dusk approaches, you stumble upon an ancient ruin shrouded by stunted spruce—a shrine or temple reduced to a foundation pit and half a dozen pillars among the trees.

The doppelgangers gather intelligence for the cult. They have been trailing the PCs since picking up word of their search for Jaryn from an earlier village.

Tactical Encounter: "Blades in the Night" (page 38).

Development

It is important that one of the doppelgangers escapes this encounter. See "The Dark Stairs" (page 50) for more information.

Dead doppelgangers revert to normal form, revealing cult tunics and Naarash talismans (see below).

If the PCs failed to obtain the location of the Black March in Erstlin, one of the doppelgangers carries a parchment map of the area. It shows a narrow pass through the foothills that leads to the Black March.

Treasure: One of the dead doppelgangers wears a purse containing the assassins' operating funds—a black pearl (500 gp) and 50 gp.

Naarash Talismans

The cultists sent out from the Pillars of Night wear a rough silver talisman set with a chip of blood-red stone. This is a fragment of the Eye of Naarash, and cultists who wear the talisman are bound to the demon's service. Through the talismans, Naarash feeds on the dark energy of the cultists' murderous acts. This connection grants temple cultists wearing the talisman 1 action point.

When a cultist dies, the stone dissolves into blood-red mist. PCs searching slain cultists find them wearing talismans with an empty space where a stone should be set. Cultists who are captured alive have intact talismans, but removing a talisman automatically slays a cultist, the stone dissolving as a result. (Captured cultists typically kill themselves by tearing their talismans off, preventing torture and interrogation.)

A talisman whose stone has faded is magically inert. A DC 26 Arcana check detects the magic of an intact talisman and its elemental power source.

A Timely Rescue

Encounter Level 3 (725 XP)

Setup

A Hand death squad has pursued these refugees across the frontier on an unholy mission of execution.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

2 human bandits (B)
2 human guards (G)
1 human mage (M)

The cultists expect no resistance, and the PCs gain a surprise round if they attack at once. The injured refugees scatter when the fight begins. Attempts at Diplomacy are met with open scorn.

Tactics

The two bandits reserve *dazing strike* for use against a striker or defender. The guards focus on weaker foes, hoping to dispatch them quickly. If they fight with the bandits, they use *powerful strike* to knock a foe prone, leaving the bandits to finish him off. The mage uses the cover of the tents to his advantage, striking at a distance with *thunderburst* and *dancing lightning*. The cultists fight until slain.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The mage and one of the guards carry sunrods (bright light out to 20 squares).

Tents: Tents can be opened from any side. One tent wall provides cover; two provide superior cover.

Fallen Tent: This heap of canvas is difficult terrain.

Buildings: Shops and houses are blocking terrain.

2 Human Bandits (B) — **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 125 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12
Speed 6

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Dazing Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires mace; +4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, the target is dazed until the end of the human bandit's next turn, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.

Combat Advantage
The human bandit deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, mace, 4 daggers

2 Human Guards (G) — **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 150 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14
Speed 5

Halberd (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the human guard's next turn.

Powerful Strike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires halberd; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Streetwise +7
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment chainmail with Bane's symbol, halberd, crossbow with 20 bolts

Human Mage (M) — **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 175

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**
Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.

Dancing Lightning (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: range 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.

Thunderburst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**
Area burst 1 within 10; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +11
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment robes, cult tunic, quarterstaff, wand

Village Showdown

Encounter Level 4 (1,050 XP)

Setup

Having seen that the house is surrounded, Auldwyl ignores the PCs as he runs to secure the front door. If the PCs choose to look out, only the bugbear warriors are seen.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

3 bugbear warriors (B)
2 hobgoblin archers (A)
1 hobgoblin warcaster (W)

When the bugbears break in, read:

Even as Auldwyl attempts to lock the front doors, they slam inward with a crash, knocking him to the ground. The hulking figures of two bugbears surge past him, snarling a challenge as they heft morningstars and attack.

Auldwyl spends the fight unconscious. If this encounter takes place in another house in town, any resident NPCs take shelter beneath a bed, a table, or a desk. Do not involve them in combat.

Tactics

The bugbears flank the closet PCs, using the confined space within the house to keep from being flanked. They attempt to drive the PCs outside where the archers and the warcaster are waiting.

The hobgoblin archers advance to the closest windows, smashing in the shutters with a minor action and firing at any PCs within sight. If PCs move outside, the archers retreat to fire from the cover of the trees, staying within 5 squares of each other and concentrating fire on a single foe.

The hobgoblin warcaster slips into the house 1 round after the bugbears, using his *shock staff* against any PC not engaged in melee. If the PCs leave the house, he follows, using *force lure* and *force pulse* to keep targets in the light.

The fanatical cultists fight to the death.

2 Hobgoblin Archers (A) **Level 3 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 39; **Bloodied** 19
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the hobgoblin archer grants an ally within 5 squares of it a +2 bonus to its next ranged attack roll against the same target.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin archer suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin archer makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +5, Stealth +12
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows, Naarash talisman

Hobgoblin Warcaster (W) **Level 3 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Staff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.

Shock Staff (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) • **Lightning, Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hobgoblin warcaster's next turn.

Force Lure (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Force, Implement**
Ranged 5; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 force damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

Force Pulse (standard; recharge ⚃) ✦ **Force**
Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is neither pushed nor knocked prone.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin warcaster suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin warcaster makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Arcana +10, Athletics +4, Stealth +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 19 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Equipment robes, cult tunic, staff, +2 *magic rod*, Naarash talisman

3 Bugbear Warriors (B)		Level 5 Brute
Medium natural humanoid		XP 200 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision	
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38		
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⊕ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
+7 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.		
⸸ **Skullthumper** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**		
Requires morningstar and combat advantage; +5 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).		
Predatory Eye (minor; encounter)		
The bugbear warrior deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes with combat advantage. It must apply this bonus before the end of its next turn.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Goblin	
Skills Intimidate +9, Stealth +12		
Str 20 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+5)	**Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+2)	**Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment hide armor, cult tunic, morningstar, Naarash talisman		

Features of the Area

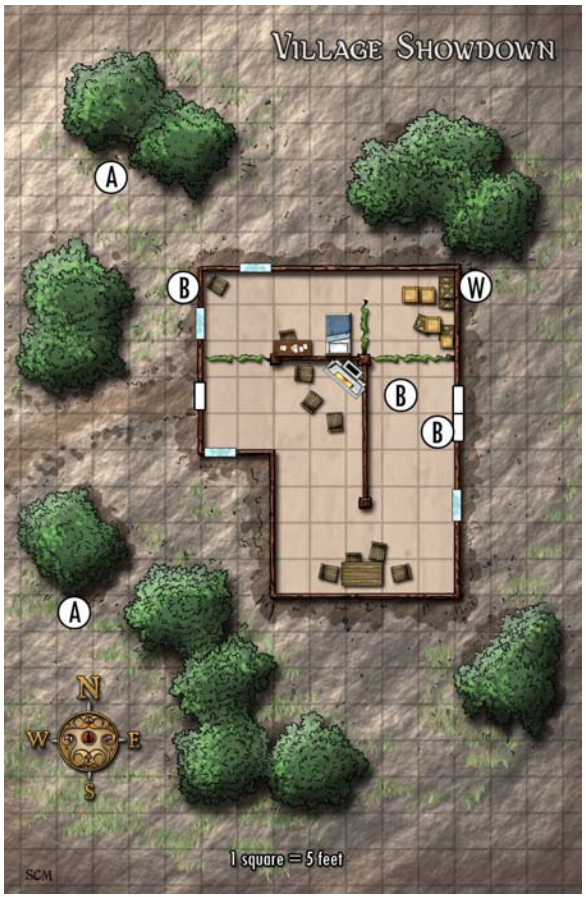
Illumination: Lanterns (bright light out to 10 squares) in each room of the house. Open windows and doors shed dim light for 2 squares outside. All other areas are dark.

Post: These rough-cut ceiling posts provide cover.

Walls: Rough plank walls make the squares they bisect difficult terrain.

Window: Perception checks made through a shuttered window take a –5 penalty. Windows can be opened as a free action from inside. From outside, they can be forced open with a DC 13 Strength check (a minor action). Open windows provide superior cover.

It costs 2 squares of movement to move through an open window.



Curtains: Heavy wool curtains on ceiling hooks extend the length of the house's interior walls. They provide total concealment. It takes a DC 8 Strength check to pull a curtain down.

Crates: The two stacks of crates hold weapons and armor smuggled by the cult. Each stack is 5 feet high and grants cover. It can be climbed with a DC 5 Athletics check.

Bed: The bed provides cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on the bed. A character can make a DC 15 Strength check to tip over the bed, which can then grant superior cover.

Chairs: These are difficult terrain.

Table and Desk: A Small creature can move under a table or desk and possibly gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on a table or desk. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a table or desk, which can then grant superior cover.

Fireplace: A fire blazes in this open hearth. A creature forced into the square completely covered by the fireplace takes 1d6 fire damage per round.

Trees: Close-growing stands of alder provide cover and are difficult terrain.

Treasure: The warcaster's +2 *magic rod* can be recovered once he has been defeated.

Blades in the Night

Encounter Level 7 (1,400 XP)

Setup

One of the doppelganger assassins has met Jaryn at the Pillars of Night. All the doppelgangers take the paladin's form to confuse the PCs.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

4 doppelganger assassins

Allow the PCs to decide where they camp on the map. To avoid alerting them to imminent combat, do not place a miniature for the first doppelganger when it appears as the wounded Jaryn. The other doppelgangers stay behind the trees, which provide cover.

When the doppelganger approaches, read:

A cry rings out. A crashing of branches precedes a male human with the sun of Pelor on his cloak, blond hair hanging ragged, lurching into the light. As he stumbles toward you, you see a prominent scar on his left cheek.

Give the PCs time to recognize Jaryn. If they are too wary to approach, the doppelganger stumbles to within striking distance.

When the doppelganger attacks, read:

The paladin's mouth widens in a leer, and a short sword whips out from under his cloak as he attacks.

Tactics

Roll initiative for the first doppelganger's attack, then have the other doppelgangers ready actions. After the first doppelganger attacks, it retreats to the trees so that another doppelganger (also appearing as Jaryn) can attack from a different location. When the PCs have determined that the Jaryn they are fighting is more than one creature, the doppelgangers attack en masse.

When three doppelganger assassins fall, the fourth uses *cloud mind* to flee into the darkness.

4 Doppelganger Assassins		**Level 8 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)		XP 350 each
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +10	
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34		
AC 23; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⨁ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.		
⨽ **Shapeshifter Feint** (minor; at-will)		
+11 vs. Reflex; the doppelganger assassin gains combat advantage against the target until the end of the doppelganger assassin's next turn.		
⨳ **Cloud Mind** (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Charm**		
Close burst 5; +11 vs. Will; the doppelganger assassin is invisible to the target. Affected targets are unable to see the doppelganger for as long as it sustains the effect, until the doppelganger attacks, or until it is hit by an attack.		
Combat Advantage		
The doppelganger assassin deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.		
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**		
A doppelganger can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (see Change Shape, *MM* 280).		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common	
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +12, Stealth +14		
Str 12 (+5)	**Dex** 21 (+9)	**Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 15 (+6)	**Int** 13 (+5)	**Cha** 19 (+8)
Equipment dagger, cult tunic, Naarash talisman		

Features of the Area

Illumination: Whatever light the PCs use.

Columns: These stone columns provide cover and can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check.

Trees: Gnarled spruce surround the ruins, their trunks providing cover. Their thick foliage grants total concealment and is difficult terrain. A tree can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check.

Foundation Pit: This rubble-strewn pit stands 5 feet below the surrounding terrain. Jumping into the pit costs 2 squares of movement.

Stairs: The rubble-choked stairs are difficult terrain.

Rubble Slope: This mass of gravel and scree is difficult terrain. Any character descending the rubble slope must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check or fall prone at the slope's bottom edge.

Black March, White Water

Beyond the roadless plains of the frontier, the Black March is a well-marked track through forested hills.

The landmarks on the map hold true, and another three days across open plains brings you to the foot of the hills the locals call the Harsmad. There, a narrow pass marks the beginning of the Black March. True to its name, the road is a dark scar through densely forested hills, the gloom of the trees broken only by the brief light of noon.

For seven days, your path slowly climbs, the track offering glimpses of the Moonsfall Mountains ahead. A half-dozen times, you see hobgoblin patrols on foot, but the cultists make so much noise that they are easily avoided in the shadows off of the trail. The Hand of Naarash must believe that few would be brave—or foolish—enough to pursue them into the heart of their domain.

B1. Hunter and Hunted

Unless the players tell you they are staying cautious despite the apparent freedom of the road (watching for signs of ambush, scouting ahead, and so on), the PCs can make only a passive Perception check at the start of this encounter. A group of shadow hounds comes across the party during a hunting run through the woods. A DC 25 Perception check spots the hounds moving past nearby trees:

From the corner of your eye, you see sudden movement. The shadow beneath the trees shifts and ripples like water disturbed by the passage of some fast-moving creature.

Tactical Encounter: "Hunter and Hunted" (page 46).

B2. Adakmi

Assuming the previous encounter inspires continued caution, the party travels two more days along the Black March without incident. At dusk on the ninth day out from Erstlin, the road tops a low rise:

The jagged slopes of the Moonsfall rise to the north. They are blood-red in the gathering dusk. A surging waterfall descends from a cleft, feeding the dark line of a river twisting off to the south. However, what catches your eye isn't the natural landscape but an unexpected sign of civilization in the midst of it—a walled citadel below the falls. The Black March continues past into the mountains, quickly disappearing from sight.

The PCs might assume that the city ahead is a cult enclave. However, when they are close enough to make Perception checks, read:

Along the rough stone walls of the citadel, bodies are lashed. Most are hobgoblins by their misshapen look, but a few humans hang among them. Thin strips of leathery flesh cling to eyeless skulls. Crows swarm the more recent dead. All wear the tunics of the Hand of Naarash, the symbol of Bane at their chests.

The guards are on constant alert against Hand attacks and fire on anyone attempting to approach unseen (use the human guard statistics on page 35). However, PCs approaching openly on the road can reach the citadel gate without incident.

Before the fall of Nerath, Adakmi was the center of a wide-ranging culture of forest villages, nomadic hunting tribes, and isolated mining towns dotting the lands of the Moonsfall. In these dark days, most of those on the road are refugees. The PCs are asked their identities and their purpose in seeking the citadel. Any talk of fighting the cult sees the gate opened at once.

In the Town

Within its walls, Adakmi could be any other frontier town. If the players are in a hurry to keep the action going, point them directly toward Glasur (see "The Last Moonboat," below). Alternatively, Adakmi makes an ideal midpoint break in a longer campaign arc. You can expand the PCs' time in the town with role-playing encounters, and can turn finding Glasur into a skill challenge.

Adakmi was once an outpost of Nerath. When the empire fell, the scattered folk of the mountains initially abandoned their villages and gravitated here for safety before expanding outward again. They created a well-defended enclave that now supports a population of two thousand, mostly humans, elves, and half-elves.

Any supplies and equipment the PCs need can be purchased here, and lodging can be found in rooms above the Sundial Tavern. All prices are 25 percent higher than standard because of the city's isolation.

The location of the citadel places it in direct proximity to the Hand of Naarash, but Adakmi remains defiant. Hatred of the Hand is a subject the folk of the town discuss freely. When the PCs mention their goal of reaching the Pillars of Night, they receive the following information in response:

"The temple's two weeks north along the Black March. Problem is, you'll be dead within two days along that road. In the villages the cult razes, those they don't kill are taken north. The strongest and the toughest join the cult by

slaughtering their own kin. That's who hunts along the north March, fast and silent—not like the hobgoblin rabble south of the mountains. Only other way north is the river, but you'd need a moonboat for that and the boats are long gone."

B3. The Last Moonboat

Since before the fall of Nerath, brave river captains have plied the waters of the Moonsfall—fast-flowing glacial torrents winding their way from the plateaus of the north to the southern foot of the mountains. These dangerous trade routes opened up the far-flung frontier, but they have been abandoned since the rise of the cult.

Shortly after the PCs hear of the moonboats, a taciturn dwarf seeks them out at the tavern.

From beneath a flat cap, the thickly muscled dwarf gives a deferential nod. "Heard you're looking for a way north. People tell you the road is death; they're right. People tell you the moonboats are gone; they're wrong. I've seen the Pillars of Night. I can get you there."

Glasur is the last of the captains who once sailed the Moonsfall rivers. He estimates a nine-day trip to the Pillars of Night, telling the PCs they should take the Falls Road at dawn when they're ready to leave.

In response to any questions of payment, the dwarf says that a mere 20 gp will cover his costs. However, a DC 18 Insight check notes that his mood grows dark. Before he takes his leave of the PCs, he says:

"Glasur's not Adakmi-born. Had a family in a village upriver once. Not anymore. Cult saw to that."

The Moondocks

From the gates of Adakmi, the little-used Falls Road runs north, zigzagging up the flank of the mountain as it climbs past and then above the cascading waterfall. At three places along the way, the road has disappeared beneath rockslides that take a DC 26 Athletics check to clamber across.

An hour of steep climbing brings you out above the mist, the river a rough torrent where it tumbles toward the falls. Along banks of dark shale, a deserted dockyard spreads, ruined wharfs clinging to blackened pilings. Where a dozen boats might once have moored, a ramshackle 35-foot cutter floats, "Blacksnake" etched on its prow. The boat is sheltered by a central awning, a raised tiller deck behind

it. Glasur is at the prow, tying off ropes. He acknowledges your approach with a nod.

The boat has no mast, however. But even as you wonder whether Glasur expects you all to row against the raging current, you see movement in the foaming water. Two pike-like fish half the length of the boat thrash there, both creatures harnessed to the ropes Glasur is setting.

"River's slow this time of year," the dwarf calls. "Been a while since my girls got a chance to run. We leave when you're ready."

Like all the riverboats that once ran north, the *Blacksnake* is powered by a team of trained dire pike. Against the furious current, they make solid headway at a rate of 20 miles per day.

For four days, you make steady progress north. Glasur's dire pike pull the moonboat with unceasing strength by day; the dwarf unharnesses them each night to hunt in the river's frigid depths. In that time, you pass the remains of three villages burned to the ground by the cult, and the river grows narrow, twisting in places through canyons of black stone. No signs of life or movement can be seen on either shore.

The river courses that Glasur follows run parallel to the Black March, winding north on the other side of the mountains.

B4. Fire on the Water

As the PCs head upriver, they come across a cult death squad razing an isolated village.

Over the next two days, the white-water canyons of the river's middle reaches begin to give way to wide gravel banks spilling down the mountainsides. Then ahead, you see the sky darkening beyond the bend of the river, a heavy plume of gray-black smoke twisting on the wind.

If he is asked what lies ahead, Glasur responds darkly:

"There's a village a mile up," the dwarf rumbles. "Or there was a village, by the look of it."

The PCs continue upriver for another half-mile before Glasur puts into shore out of sight of the village. A short walk lets the party approach without being seen.

Tactical Encounter: "Fire on the Water" (page 47).

Development

Death squad members wear Naarash talismans and the tunic or armor of the cult. When the fight is done, the surviving villagers return to the ruin along the river. The villagers' leader is Yrma, an elderly woman with a dour disposition. She thanks the PCs for their aid, but tells them their efforts will amount to nothing in the end:

"Two strangers came this way not four months past. The human said the cult would soon be a memory. Instead, it is our life here that will be forgotten."

The paladin Jaryn and the tiefling Dajani are the strangers Yrma speaks of. In response to any questions, she relays the following:

"They were bound for the Pillars of Night, seeking the cult chief Larkazh. Half mad, the human looked to me, threatening on his blood to besiege the temple single-handedly."

Provide the PCs with one or more rumors they were unable to obtain as they sought the Black March (see page 33). The villagers gather what they can and head south to Adakmi, joining the flood of refugees seeking new lives beyond the frontier.

Treasure: The human mage wears a *diadem of acuity* that Yrma and her people are happy to let the PCs have as thanks for their aid.

B5. The Friend of My Enemy

In the aftermath of battle, Glasur is anxious to get under way. The dwarf is clearly on edge.

As you make your way upriver, you note Glasur glancing back over his shoulder to the thickly forested shore. "When I pulled in before the village, could've sworn I saw something moving. No matter, I guess. Can't follow us through these trees, whatever it was."

No sign of any creature can be seen by the PCs, their pursuer taking precautions after being spotted by Glasur. Dajani is Jaryn's only surviving companion—a tiefling darkblade who turned to the faith of Pelor in an attempt to control his wicked nature. Unfortunately, that nature made it all too easy for him to follow Jaryn into darkness.

Charged with observing the city for Jaryn's new order, Dajani arrived in Adakmi a few days after the PCs. He heard about the party's mission and has pursued the *Blacksnake* north ever since. From the Black March, he ordered a death squad to the village, hoping to draw the PCs in. Failing in his attempt to ambush them on their return to the boat, he seeks another opportunity before the canyons to the north make pursuit impossible.

Tactical Encounter: "The Friend of My Enemy" (page 49).

Development

Over the standard cult tunic and a Naarash talisman, Dajani wears a filthy cloak matching that worn by Emesha and the Light of the Sun. A DC 26 Perception check reveals a hidden pocket in the cloak containing a diary and a stub of charcoal pencil.

The first half of the diary's pages record Jaryn's journey west and north, filling in additional missing rumors from page 33. After a number of torn-out pages, the tiefling talks of setting aside his former life for the power of the new age, though he makes no specific mention of Jaryn's fall or his leadership of the cult.

Treasure: In addition to his *boots of striding*, Dajani carries a *potion of healing*, 40 gp, and a piece of carved ivory embossed with platinum (250 gp). This scrimshaw is in the shape of Pelor's sun.

The Pillars of Night

After two days with no encounters, the PCs notice a change in the landscape.

The riverbanks have flattened. Stunted gray trees cling tenaciously to rocky hills beyond. The sun is setting, and the dire pike are thrashing against the white-water current. And then in the distance, you see it—a twisted rise of dark stone, its lower third carved into perfectly aligned upright slabs. As the peak disappears into the descending dusk, the pillars appear to hold up the dark sky itself. The temple lies before you, a day's march away.

Darkness falls as Glasur finds moorage in a sheltered side channel, giving the PCs one final night to make plans. The dwarf is amenable to waiting for their return. From the river, the PCs have no trouble making their way through the surrounding scrub hills for the distant temple.

For the better part of the day, you hike toward your goal, finally slipping through a screen of scrub trees and up a low rise. Winding its way through forest a mile or two off, you see the Black March end where it meets the base of the mountain and the settlement spreading beneath it. Straight-edged roads of cracked flagstone run between huge buildings of timber and stone.

Many of those structures have collapsed, but the inhabited core of the temple grounds has the appearance of any northern village. No slaves or prisoners can be seen here. Though groups of cultists train with sword and shield, no guards or apparent overseers can be seen. Only folk in the now-familiar garb of the cult—children among them—are visible as they go about frontier life.

At the base of the mountain, an oversized avenue leads to a wide flight of immense stone steps. These rise to a portal open in the mountain's face. Firelight flares from within a wide hall running into the mountain's heart.

Allow the PCs to move closer to the temple grounds, and then continue:

Great sections of the rocky landscape are given over to gardens and orchards. Mule teams haul logs and deadfall from the nearby woods. Sheep and cattle are herded into rough stone corrals as dusk falls. At different sites, construction is evident, new living spaces being reclaimed from the ruins. Fires begin to spring up. The smells of roast meat and woodsmoke drift toward you on the breeze.

The PCs can estimate that some five hundred cultists dwell in the central temple grounds, but more camps can be seen scattered through the surrounding forest. No fence or other boundary surrounds the complex, and cultists move freely within it. The cult has no fear of incursion or attack, trusting the patrols on the Black March to take care of any intruders. As long as the PCs disguise themselves—most easily with the tunics worn by the cultists they have slain—they can literally walk in and make themselves at home.

A majority of the cultists are human and hobgoblin, but dragonborn, dwarves, and tieflings are common in the temple complex. Elves, half-elves, and eladrin can easily pass for human as long as they wear temple garb. Halflings can disguise themselves as children.

The Temple Grounds

Cultists encountering the PCs assume they are new recruits newly arrived along the Black March. A DC 18 Bluff check from any one of the PCs maintains this facade.

When the PCs have had time to observe the cult close up, read:

Beneath the initial appearance of a communal village, this place has a hard and dangerous edge. A rigid sense of order and hierarchy permeates the labors of the people

around you. Select cultists wearing a black sash appear to be wardens of some type, but no other signs of rank can be seen. The people of this place are uniformly whipcord lean. Where nine- and ten-year-old children roughhouse with sticks, they show off a ruthless precision in their relentless attacks.

Perception checks or Insight checks made against the cultists reveal a sense of driven energy and focus that speaks to a high degree of regimentation. It might resemble a village, but Naarash is very much a military enclave.

Small groups are spelled off from their labors at intervals, training hard with sword and shield or chanting Bane's dark rites. At the fires, people take their meals with the same stoic intensity they apply to the labors of the day—the same intensity you saw in the killers you met on the long road that led you here.

Fighter or warlord PCs recognize advanced tactics in the cultists' training. Their weapons and armor are the same quality as the smuggled gear seen in Erstlin. Characters with the Religion skill recognize the rites the small groups engage in as ceremonies of personal strength.

If the PCs investigate the stairs leading into the mountain, read:

Access to the stairs is open, but the dozen guards lining both sides of the approach inspire you to keep a safe distance. The staircase is easily twice a normal size, each step and riser a full pace wide. The size of the stone buildings in the complex makes sense now. These are giants' ruins, and old by the look of it.

The PCs discover that the talismans worn by the cultists they fought are absent from the residents of the temple grounds, even the wardens. Read the following at an appropriate time:

In the midst of the day's labors, you witness a group descending the mountain stairs. A ceremonial procession takes them to the head of the Black March, down which they depart to cheers from the assembled cultists. Their livery marks them as a death squad. Around their necks, they wear the blood-red stone talismans.

If the PCs ask about lodging for new arrivals, they are directed to an empty dwelling that offers privacy. Alternatively, the party can claim any number of unoccupied ruins.

B6. Among the Wolves

The PCs are close to uncovering Jaryn's ultimate fate, but this will not be a standard intelligence-gathering mission. The temple grounds offer no equivalent to the local tavern, and characters cannot simply walk up to a cultist and start asking questions.

Skill Challenge

Level 5, Difficulty 3 (600 XP)

With free run of the temple complex, the party must win the trust of the cultists to obtain information regarding Jaryn's fall. Checks are made by individual PCs, so it is possible for the party to obtain all relevant information in two or three days. Alternatively, characters can spend a few days getting acclimated to life in the temple (attempting only moderate-DC checks) before attempting to find out what the cultists know.

The Straight-Up Approach

It will be obvious to most players that the hall within the mountain is where the endgame of the adventure will be played out. If the PCs forgo interaction with the cultists in favor of a stealth assault on the mountain, add a combat encounter to take the place of the skill challenge of encounter B6.

The improvised combat encounter takes place in areas T1 and T2 (page 50). Use six advanced human berserkers (page 56) as elite guards in the grand hall. The PCs can approach in the guise of cultists, but the guards attack if anyone tries to move past their position. To protect the inner temple, the guards close the main doors during the fight, activating the magical wards.

Players who take this shoot-first-talk-later approach will gain no knowledge of Jaryn's fall into the ranks of the cultists. Fill in bits of this information as appropriate from interrogated guards, hidden notes and journals, or the newer writing in area T5.

Setup: The party must adopt not just the guise but the culture of the temple cultists, joining them in their labors and faith to earn their trust. If they are successful, they gain information regarding the whereabouts of Jaryn and the inner workings of the cult.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Religion

Athletics (DC 21): A PC takes his place alongside the cultists for their day's labor or military training. Low DC penalty: The PC fails to pull his weight, taking a –2 penalty to all subsequent Bluff or Diplomacy checks. High DC bonus: The PC demonstrates exceptional effort or skill, gaining a +2 bonus to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check, as well as one piece of information regarding Jaryn's fate (see below).

Religion (DC 13): A character can draw on knowledge of Bane's faith to lead a ceremony. Low DC penalty: The PC's incomplete knowledge leaves the cultists unimpressed, imposing a –2 penalty to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check. High DC bonus: The PC earns the respect of a cleric of Bane, granting a +2 bonus to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check, as well as one piece of information (see below).

Other Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy

Bluff (DC 13): As the PCs work alongside the cultists, they seek favorable position. Each day, a PC can make a single Bluff check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. Low DC Penalty: The PC's Bluff attempts make him appear arrogant, imposing a –2 penalty to his next Athletics or Religion check. High DC Bonus: A cultist treats the PC as a confidant, granting a +2 bonus to his next Athletics or Religion check.

Diplomacy (DC 13): A character is able to get into the cultists' good graces. Each day, a PC can make a single Diplomacy check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. Low DC Penalty: The PC's attempts at conciliation are taken as a sign of weakness, imposing a –2 penalty to his next Athletics or Religion check. High DC Bonus: The PC is able to increase his standing with the cult; he can reroll a single upcoming Athletics or Religion check, keeping the higher of the two rolls.

Success: Word of the labors and piety of these "new recruits" reaches ranking members of the cult. The PCs are to be taken to the inner temple at sundown that night to partake of a ceremony called the Rite of the Eye.

Failure: The PCs' failed attempts to pass themselves off as cult members force them to flee to the inner temple before they are exposed. Use the suggestions in "The Straight-Up Approach" sidebar (page 42) to create a combat encounter to take the place of the failed skill challenge.

Jaryn's Fate

As the PCs gain the cultists' trust, they pick up information on the inner workings of the temple and the surprising fate of Jaryn. Information can be given out in the order presented, or you can decide what to reveal based on the specific information the PCs tell you they are seeking.

INFORMATION

1. "I was here when Jaryn was dragged up the Black March in chains. I was here, too, when he stood atop the Dark Stairs as the Voice of Naarash."
2. "Jaryn and Larkazh met between the river and the Black March. Two dozen of Bane's best against the paladin and his tiefling, and in the end, Larkazh was the only one standing."
3. "Larkazh's two brothers were cut down by Jaryn's own hand. He brought Jaryn and Dajani back alive and to the inner temple, a sacrifice to Bane. Come morning, Jaryn walks out, Dajani one step behind him, and Larkazh's head is in Jaryn's hand."
4. "Everything changed under Jaryn. Used to be, the death squads ran the temple, killed each other as fast as they could. Jaryn got them under control and made them an army."
5. "The enclave at Adakmi will be the start of it. The eathens will be nailed to their own walls and their citadel made the staging ground for Bane's armies as they move south."
6. "Jaryn might look human, but he's not. Bane's blood flows in those veins. The chosen one, he is."
7. "The fall of Nerath was the first sign. The gods of light have been broken and have left this world to Bane. The dark god's hand squeezes shut, and when it opens, only the chosen will remain."
8. "Bane's voice speaks through Jaryn, and his word welcomes the darkness of a new age. He is the god arisen, Naarash's heir. The strong shall inherit this world, while the weak shall fall before them and be lost.

Hunter and Hunted

Encounter Level 6 (1,250 XP)

Setup

Place the PCs on the road in the middle of the map, then place only the four shadow hounds closest to the road. The fifth stays within the trees to gain total concealment.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

5 shadow hounds (S)

Taking the party to be one of the cult patrols they routinely hunt for sport, the shadow hounds attack at once.

When the shadow hounds attack, read:

A hoarse baying suddenly rings out through the forest to both sides of the track. Four canine shapes unfurl from the shadows around you, their slavering jaws open wide.

Tactics

Four shadow hounds attack at once, the fifth hanging back to target any PC who breaks off from the group. Their *shroud of night* aura dims the light in the area, granting the hounds concealment (-2 to attack rolls) on the road. They gain total concealment (-5 to attack rolls and targets cannot be seen) in the undergrowth unless the PCs bring light sources to bear.

The hounds use their *baying* attack one at a time as long as three or more PCs are within range, maximizing the length of time characters are affected. Using their *shadow ambush* power, they target lightly armored characters first. The shadow hounds fight to the death.

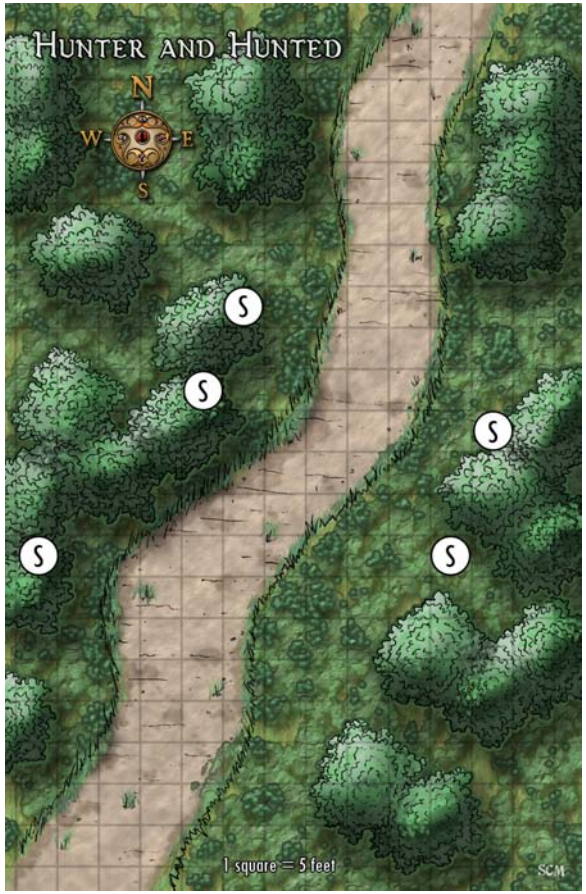
Features of the Area

Illumination: Daylight (bright) on the road; dim light in the undergrowth and the trees.

Undergrowth: Thick stands of creepers, vines, and saplings are difficult terrain.

Trees: Close-growing conifers rise along both sides of the road. They grant total concealment. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to enter the trees, and they are difficult terrain.

5 Shadow Hounds (S)	**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow magical beast	XP 250 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
Shroud of Night aura 2; bright light in the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.	
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Vulnerable 5 radiant	
Speed 7, teleport 7	
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage; see also *shadow ambush*.	
Baying (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear**	
Close burst 5; +8 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of the shadow hound's next turn.	
Shadow Ambush	
When the shadow hound teleports adjacent to an enemy, it gains combat advantage and deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes against that enemy this turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Endurance +10, Stealth +10	
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+6)



Fire on the Water

Encounter Level 5 (1,050 XP)

Setup

The PCs approach the village from around a river bend. Scrub trees along the shore offer concealment.

When the village is in sight, read:

Between the river and the thinly forested mountainside, a village burns. Along the river's edge stand the hulking figures of three dragonborn in scale armor marked with the fist of Bane. Some human villagers attempt to flee, but have nowhere to go.

This encounter includes the following creatures:
3 dragonborn soldiers (D)
1 death cultist mage (M)
1 bugbear strangler (B)

When the dragonborn spot the PCs' approach through the scrub trees, they give up terrorizing the villagers and await the party's approach. The villagers flee to safe positions in the woods until combat is done. Do not place the human mage and the bugbear strangler until they are seen.

When the PCs are seen, read:

One of the dragonborn bellows a warning as he spots you. His two companions turn away from the villagers, who quickly disappear along the shore to the north.

Tactics

The dragonborn stay in the thick of melee to take advantage of their *impetuous spirit*. They hold back with their breath weapons until bloodied or until they can maximize the number of targets.

The human mage moves to the southern window, attacking with *dancing lightning* (against PCs that have spread out) and *thunderburst* (against targets clustered together). He stays inside the building until threatened by fire or the PCs, whereupon he escapes through the south or west window. Outside, he keeps his distance from the PCs, sniping with *magic missile*.

The bugbear strangler slips through the door in hopes of catching a lone PC moving between the buildings. It readies an action to shift into the smoke, using Stealth to gain combat advantage for its strangle attack.

The cultists have come to expect only token resistance as they scour the remote mountain villages. All five fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Daylight (bright).

Burning Buildings: Fire has already jumped to the last two houses along the riverfront. It spreads at a rate of 1 square per round in a direction of your choosing. Creatures that pass through the flames take 3d6 fire damage per round.

Smoke: Squares within 5 feet of the fire are filled with a haze of acrid smoke, spreading as the fire does. A creature that ends its turn in the smoke must make a saving throw or become dazed.

River: The water adjacent to the village is shallow enough that the effect of the fast-flowing current is not felt. The river is difficult terrain.

3 Dragonborn Soldiers (D)	**Level 5 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200 each
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +3
HP 63; **Bloodied** 31; see also *dragonborn fury*	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage.	
Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Cold**	
Close blast 3; +6 vs. Reflex (+7 while bloodied); 1d6 + 2 cold damage.	
Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls while bloodied.	
Impetuous Spirit (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against an enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.	
Martial Recovery (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack; encounter; recharges when the soldier uses *impetuous spirit*) ✦ **Weapon**	
The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Endurance +9, History +4, Intimidate +8	
Str 16 (+5)	**Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	**Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment scale armor with Bane's symbol, light shield, longsword, Naarash talisman	

Furnishings: Furnishings are difficult terrain. Furnishings occupying more than 1 square provide cover.

Window: Perception checks made through a shuttered window take a –5 penalty. Windows can be opened as a free action from inside. From outside, they can be forced open with a DC 13 Strength check (a minor action). Open windows provide superior cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to move through an open window.

Treasure: The equipment carried by the villains can be recovered after the PCs are victorious.

Bugbear Strangler (B) **Level 6 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 58; **Bloodied** 29
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16; see also *body shield*
Speed 7
Action Points 1

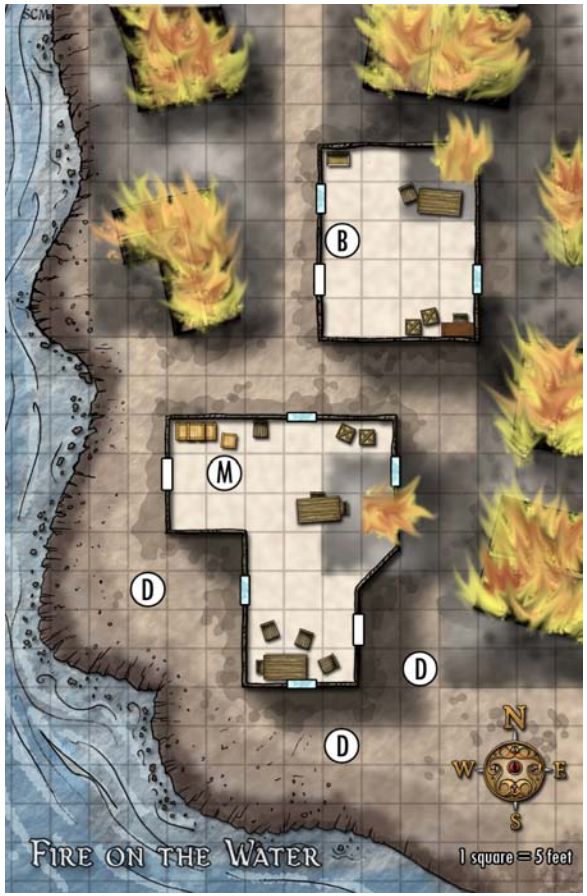
Morningstar (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

Strangle (standard; sustain standard; at-will)
Requires combat advantage; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (until escape). A target trying to escape the strangle takes a –4 penalty to the check. The bugbear strangler can sustain the power as a standard action, dealing 1d10 + 4 damage and maintaining the strangle.

Body Shield (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack against AC or Reflex; recharge ⚅)
The bugbear strangler makes its immobilized victim the target instead. The bugbear strangler can't use this power to redirect attacks made by a creature it is currently strangling.

Predatory Eye (minor; encounter)
The bugbear strangler deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes with combat advantage. It must apply this bonus before the end of its next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Intimidate +10, Stealth +14
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, morningstar, rope garrote, Naarash talisman



Death Cultist Mage (M) **Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+5 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**
Range 20; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.

Dancing Lightning (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: ranged 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.

Thunderburst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**
Area burst 1 within 10; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +11, Insight +7
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment robes, cult tunic, quarterstaff, wand, *diadem of acuity*, Naarash talisman

The Friend of My Enemy

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

Setup

The day after the river village, the PCs find moorage and make camp. A shale beach provides a chance to rest outside the cramped quarters of the boat. Allow the PCs to decide where to place their campsite.

If the PCs take Glasur's warning to heart, allow them to take precautions against ambush—keeping weapons or magic close at hand, having characters pretend to go to sleep on first watch, and so on.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

Dajani, tiefling darkblade (D)

Unless the PCs have some means of seeing Dajani, he uses *cloak of lurking* to approach invisibly from the northeast, gaining surprise when he *teleports* in.

When Dajani attacks, read:

A blur of motion erupts in camp. A cloaked figure appears from nowhere, two black-bladed short swords in his hands.

Tactics

Dajani initially *teleports* between two PCs, attacking with surprise. He then uses *cloak of lurking* to move from one PC to another, attacking invisibly each time.

Unless the PCs spread out, Dajani attacks two targets per round. When bloodied, he does not worry about retaliatory melee attacks, counting on the *demonic frenzy* granted by his connection to the Eye of Naarash to even the odds. He fights until slain.

Dajani, Tiefling Darkblade (D) Level 4 Solo Lurker
Medium natural humanoid XP 875

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 224; **Bloodied** 112
AC 21; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 16
Resist 12 fire
Saving Throws +4
Speed 7; see also *cloak of lurking*
Action Points 2

⊕ **Poisoned Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon**
+9 vs. AC (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 4 damage, and Dajani makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

ǂ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)
Dajani makes two poisoned short sword attacks (see above) but cannot make both attacks against the same target.

Cloak of Lurking (move; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
Dajani teleports 5 squares and becomes invisible until the end of his next turn.

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter; recharges when first bloodied)
Dajani gains a +1 power bonus to his next attack roll against an enemy that hit him since his last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, Dajani deals an extra 3 damage.

Demonic Frenzy (immediate reaction, when attacked by an adjacent enemy while bloodied; at-will)
Dajani makes a frenzied short sword attack against the enemy: +9 vs. AC (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 4 damage. *Secondary Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

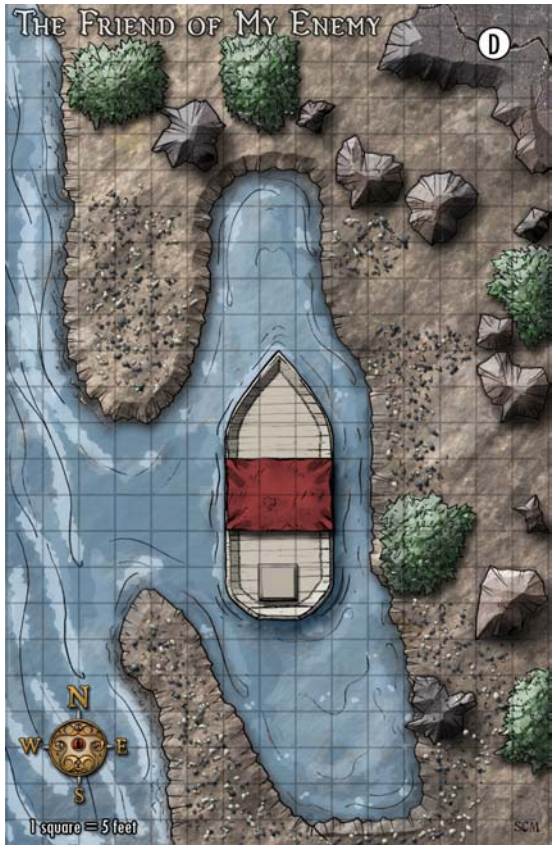
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Bluff +13, Stealth +15
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment cloak, leather armor, cult tunic, 2 poisoned short swords, *boots of striding*, Naarash talisman

Features of the Area

Illumination: Whatever light the PCs use.

Shale Rubble: Areas of racked and splintering stone are difficult terrain.

Boulders: Huge chunks of fractured stone litter this low beachhead, providing cover. A DC 5 Athletics check allows a character to jump up on a boulder as part of a move. Otherwise, they are difficult terrain.



The Blacksnake: The fast river keeps the deck moving even in this sheltered slip. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to jump from the shore; DC 5 to jump back. On a failed check, a PC makes the jump but falls prone.

River: The water adjacent to the village is shallow enough that the effect of the fast-flowing current is not felt. The river is difficult terrain.

Treasure: The equipment carried by Dajani can be recovered after the PCs are victorious.

The Temple of Naarash

In this final stage of the adventure, the PCs go up against the ancient defenses and hidden terrors of the ruined inner temple before facing Jaryn and the evil that has consumed him.

History

This ruin was an ancient temple built by a lost race of giants. Within the mountain, the giants discovered a magically resonant stone they called the Eye of Naarash—never suspecting that the stone's power was a demonic presence bound within it. Over time, the giants destroyed themselves, consumed by the murderous spirit of Naarash. The few survivors turned the temple into a prison for the evil that had destroyed their people.

Over millennia, much of the complex collapsed, its magical wards weakened. Five years ago, a hobgoblin shaman named Anak unsealed the main doors and entered the mountain. The power of Naarash quickly consumed him. Under the demon's direction, Anak reinvented an ancient cult as a sect of Bane's church. Naarash is a temperamental master, however. The Hand has gone through twelve leaders in the five years since, each slain when another gained the demon's favor.

When he was brought to the temple in chains, Jaryn had been driven to the brink of madness by his single-minded obsession with destroying the cult. The spirit of Naarash sensed the paladin's fury and consumed him, giving him the strength to slay Larkazh and claim leadership of the cult. Jaryn has since reshaped the Hand of Naarash in his own image—a twisted melding of the beliefs of the cult and his former faith.

Features of the Temple

The scale of the temple reflects the giants who built it.

Ceilings: All ceilings are 15 feet high at the walls, arching to 30 or 40 feet in the center of each chamber. The one exception is area T6 (the black cells), whose slab ceiling is a uniform 20 feet in height.

Floors: The floors are rough flagstones, with wide patches of rubble in areas T4 and T5.

Doors: When the PCs enter, they activate ancient wards that seal all the doors with *arcane locks*. Area T6 was previously sealed and trapped to prevent its occupants from escaping. All *arcane locked* doors are surrounded by a faint magical glow. Information on each door is presented at the start of the encounter area that the door leads into.

Stairs: The giant-sized stairs in the temple feature steps and risers approximately 2-1/2 feet high and wide.

Illumination: Except in areas T2 and T7, the temple has no light. The sunrods that the PCs are given should last for the duration of the PCs' time here unless players take an extended rest.

T1. The Dark Stairs

The PCs are called to the foot of the ancient staircase at dusk, ready to partake in the Rite of the Eye.

The sun has slipped behind the mountains as you are led along the ruined avenue. Two sash-wearing wardens silently hand a sunrod to each of you at the foot of the great staircase. The guards watch you climb; no escort accompanies you. High above, a pair of massive stone doors stand open with firelight flickering from within.

The cult's faith in discipline gives the PCs free access to the inner temple. However, as they reach the halfway point of the stairs, a disturbance below catches their attention.

The silence of the temple grounds is broken by distant shouting as a figure on horseback races in from the Black March. Even at a distance, you recognize the form of a doppelganger as it reins up near the fires at the center of the compound.

This rider is the surviving doppelganger assassin from the "Blades in the Night" encounter. In the time that it takes the PCs to observe, the doppelganger hears that a party matching the one he met is heading into the temple.

A shout goes up from around the fires. The guards at the foot of the stairs scramble after you. Clear through the darkness, you hear the doppelganger screaming: "Heathens! Kill them all!"

The guards are already coming up the stairs, leaving the PCs with only one direction to flee.

T2. Grand Hall

A great hall beyond the immense double doors is empty, its vaulted ceiling rising to a height of 40 feet. Burning braziers illuminate oversized stairs to the west. Two more sets of open double doors stand beyond the stairs. From below, the shouts of the guards grow louder.

The doors can be barred from inside with immense stone bolts (Strength DC 13 to push each door closed, Strength DC 17 to slide the bolt into place). If the PCs decide to push into the temple, the guards shut the doors behind them, trusting the temple's wards and Jaryn's personal guard to destroy the party.

Arrows splinter against the doors as they are slammed shut and barred. However, even as the stone bolts slide home, both doors flare with a brilliant white light that fades to a faint glow. From behind comes a deafening boom as both sets of double doors on the high landing slam shut of their own accord.

Though the temple's wards were overcome, the cultists did not have the power to disable them. By closing the front doors, the PCs have reactivated these ancient defenses.

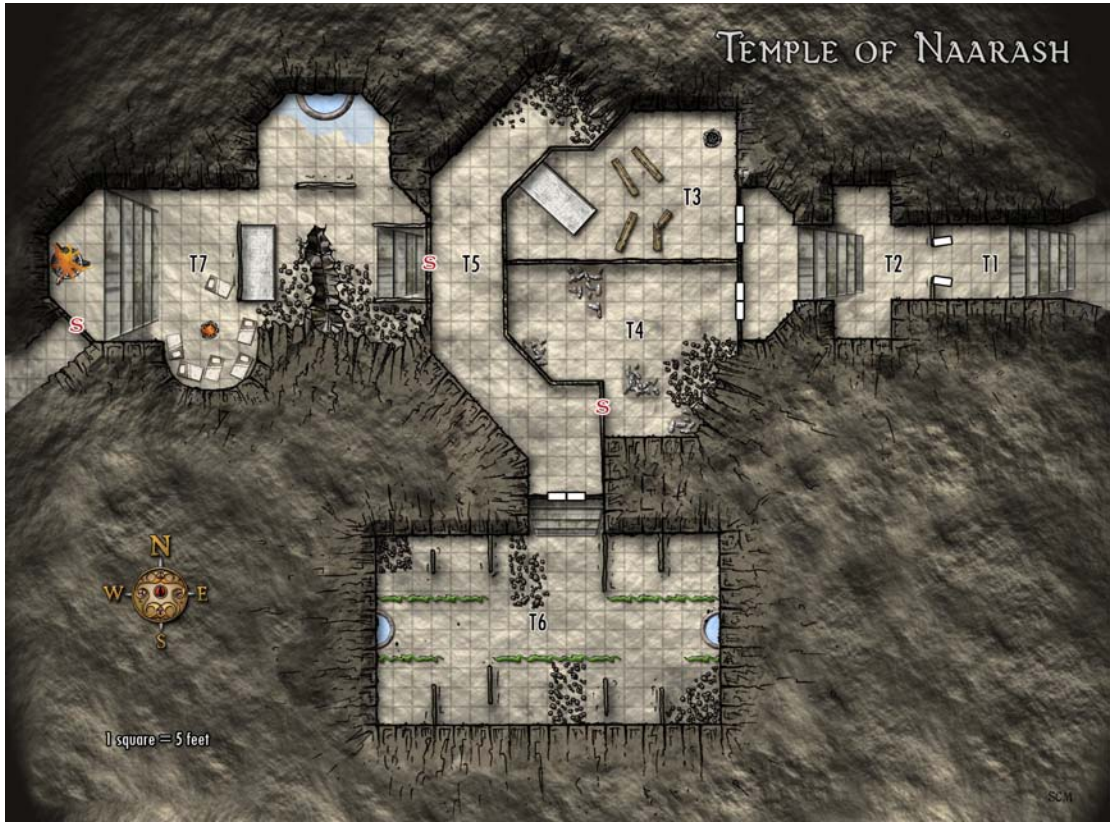
When the PCs have time to look around, read:

The walls here are carved with regular rows of oversized runes, an unknown alphabet etched in letters a foot high.

The runes are tantalizing familiar to both the Common and Davek scripts, but this ancient tongue is beyond modern knowledge. A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals a snippet of information—that this temple was built by an ancient giant race and dedicated to a spirit named Naarash.

T3. Hall of Faith

The double doors to this area are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through).



This immense chamber was once a chapel. Huge wooden benches have collapsed before a 10-foot-high stone shrine. In the northeast corner, scorch marks mar the floor and the high ceiling. Finely carved reliefs of noble giant kings and queens cover the walls.

The northeast corner of this room was used as a campsite during Anak's initial exploration of the temple five years before.

T4. Hall of Warriors

The doors to this room are *arcane locked*, but rubble prevents them from fully closing. A DC 13 Strength check opens them initially, but they become magically sealed (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through) if closed again.

This chamber appears to be a former armory. Six giant-sized suits of rusted plate armor stand against the walls, each clutching a halberd. More armor and weapons are strewn across the floor. The wall and part of the vaulted ceiling have collapsed to the southeast.

It takes a DC 26 Perception check to discover the secret door (see area T5, below).

Tactical Encounter: "Hall of Warriors" (page 54).

T5. Hall of History

The secret door into this area (Perception DC 26) pivots out from the southern corner. It is *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through). This hall once ran to the now-buried inner reaches of the temple.

A set of double doors stand to the south of this once-grand hall, but passage to the northeast is blocked where the ceiling has collapsed. Runic writing covers the walls. However, part of the western wall has been plastered over and filled with Goblin and Common script. A mosaic makes up the center of the western wall—the clenched fist of Bane rendered 15 feet long on each side in black stone.

A DC 22 Perception check made to search the mosaic notes five dark purple amethysts worth 100 gp each. However, the arcane ward that has sealed the secret door makes an attack (+8 vs. Reflex, 1d4 radiant damage) when a PC pries a gem loose. It takes a separate DC 26 Perception check to discover the secret door. Opening the door (see area T7) makes it safe to remove the gems.

A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals more information from the runes. The earliest writing talks about a beneficent faith dedicated to the weal of the giants and other sentient peoples. By the time of later inscriptions, the giants' faith had become warlike and unforgiving of weakness. The group's core faithful were identified as soldiers in an army called the Hand of Naarash.

The writing on the western wall claims the Hand to be the creation of the shaman Anak. Its apocalyptic tone speaks of Bane's faithful seizing the world from the heathen races.

T6. Black Cells

This area was sealed and trapped before the PCs activated the temple's wards. The doors are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through) and protected with a permanent glyph of warding active on both sides of the door.

Glyph of Warding — Level 7 Warder Trap — 300 XP

A door or similar portal or barrier is enchanted with a magical and hidden glyph that detonates when a creature touches it.

Perception

- DC 28: The character notices the glyph.

Additional Skill: Arcana

- DC 24: The party gets a +2 bonus to Perception checks to find the glyph and Thievery checks to disable it.

Trigger

When a creature touches the surface, the glyph explodes and attacks.

Attack

Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 3
Targets: Creatures in burst
Attack: +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d6+4 radiant damage and blind until save

Countermeasure

- An adjacent character can disable the glyph with a DC 28 Thievery check.

Beyond the double doors, cracked stairs lead down into a flat-ceilinged chamber. Two broken stone walls jut out of northern wall Beyond the wall fragments, large fountains can be seen against the room's eastern and western walls. Sheets of tattered black cloth block the view of the much of the northern and southern walls. The scent of rot hangs in the chill air.

This place was the living quarters of a group of giant priests, their meditation cells partitioned behind black curtains. These priests slew each other when the temple was abandoned, rising as zombie hulks. Anak discovered them and sealed this area off.

Tactical Encounter: "Black Cells" (page 55).

Development

A DC 26 Perception check made to search what's left of the chamber finds a scrap of parchment near a fountain—a journal of one of the priests who died here. A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals that the temple collapsed to anarchy in the end. The writer blamed the Eye of Naarash for the destruction of his people and hoped that sealing the temple would keep this evil contained.

T7. The Eye of Naarash

The secret doors in this area (Perception DC 26) are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through).

This area is the site of two tactical encounters split up by the PCs' confrontation with Jaryn. After playing the first tactical encounter, return to this section to play out the social encounter. Then return to the second tactical encounter for the final battle.

High walls flank a flight of oversized stairs leading up. A high-ceilinged chamber above is lit by everburning torches. The walls and ceiling to the south have collapsed, rubble trailing out to a rift that splits the floor. The room continues past a wall that abuts a rough stone shrine. To the north stands another wall and a splashing fountain.

Jaryn waits here with his personal guard, knowing that enemies are in the temple. He believes that the

spirit of Naarash seeks to test his strength, sending a challenger in the same way he challenged Larkazh in this place. If the PCs defeat his warriors, Jaryn will face them in combat to decide the fate of the cult.

Tactical Encounter: "Last Stand" (page 56).

Jaryn's Secret

Jaryn seems to take no notice of the defeat of his guard, ignoring their bodies as he greets the PCs.

"You have had a long journey, I expect. I knew that my time here would be limited, but I did not expect the challenge so soon. Please, sit. Rest and refresh yourself before the end."

Jaryn offers the PCs a potent wine from a decanter on the stairs, explaining that it will restore their strength for the test to come. Drinking it allows a character to regain a used healing surge. A DC 18 Arcana or Nature check confirms the wine's effect and safety.

While the PCs take a short rest (allowing them to recover their encounter powers), Jaryn speaks to them. Characters are welcome to roam the chamber as they see fit.

Under the control of the Eye of Naarash, Jaryn's vision is corrupted but he is not an automaton. He remains dedicated to humanity—but he has lost hope that humanity can survive the darkness that has descended on the world.

In response to questions, Jaryn answers as follows:

What is this place? "The temple is older than human history. It is a place of great power, and from it, a great power will rise."

What is the stone on the altar? "The Eye of Naarash is the material embodiment of Bane's might. It is the source of the strength the god grants us. The giants discovered it, but they were not worthy."

What is the Rite of the Eye? "The Rite of the Eye binds the faithful to Bane. Those who take the rite bear the talisman that commits their own life force to Naarash and the greater glory of the Hand."

Why did you let your guards die? What do you mean by a challenge? "The faith of Bane allows no weakness. Only the strongest can lead the Hand. I was made Voice of Naarash by the blood of Larkazh, even as he slew the master before him. You are here by Bane's will to challenge me. Should you succeed,

you are destined to build on what I have built until you are challenged in turn."

What happened to you to change your faith? "My faith has not changed. It has simply been refocused. The fall of Nerath marked the end of this world, but humanity lingers like the condemned man who cannot accept the end. Pelor is dead. The good, the moral, the light—these things are no more."

Why have you taken control of the cult? "Humanity's lot in this new world is struggle and death, but not all are suited to such hardship. Those who are strong will inherit the mantle of humanity. Those who cannot embrace the darkness will suffer. My way ends the torment for them. My way is mercy."

Tactical Encounter: "The Wrath of Naarash" (page 58).

Aftermath

Any of the PCs' unanswered questions regarding the Naarash can be answered with journals found on Jaryn's body or hidden behind the shrine.

Treasure: In addition to Jaryn's +2 *vicious greatsword*, a secret compartment beneath the shrine (Perception DC 22) contains a gem-cut chunk of amber (100 gp) and a giant-sized gold moonstone pendant (250 gp) suitable as a belt for smaller characters. Beneath the bedrolls, the PCs find personal effects and wealth totaling 100 gp.

After the Adventure

The rough tunnel beyond the southwest secret door leads through the mountain, emerging a safe distance away from and above the temple grounds. There, the PCs behold a scene of chaos as cultists fight each other and flee the area in droves. The demon's destruction has been felt by its unwitting followers, and the Hand of Naarash is no more.

When the PCs return to the river, they find Glasur and the Blacksnake waiting for them. The dwarf is a willing audience for the tale of the party's triumph as the PCs begin the long journey home.

Hall of Warriors

Encounter Level 4 (750 XP)

Setup

The suits of armor in this chamber are actually steel keepers—guardian constructs created by the giants. Three were reanimated by the magical wards activated when the door was closed. The other three have lost their magic over the centuries and now stand harmless. The remains of three more steel keepers—now piles of armor—will attack PCs if they get too near. When the first PC steps within 2 squares of one of the active steel keepers, all three come to life.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

3 steel keepers (S)

Use the same miniatures for the steel keepers and the inert armor, so that PCs assume the armor is a threat.

As the steel keepers animate, read:

A grinding of metal on metal rings out as the suit of giant-sized plate closest to you begins to move. Two more of the suits of armor detach from the walls at the same time, their rusted halberds raised as they attack.

Tactics

The steel keepers harry the PCs with halberd attacks to prevent them from reaching the secret door, using *iron defense* to immobilize foes staying out of reach. They pursue the PCs into any part of the complex. If the party manages to retreat into area 2 and close the doors behind them, the constructs break through the doors in 2 rounds.

The steel keepers fight until destroyed.

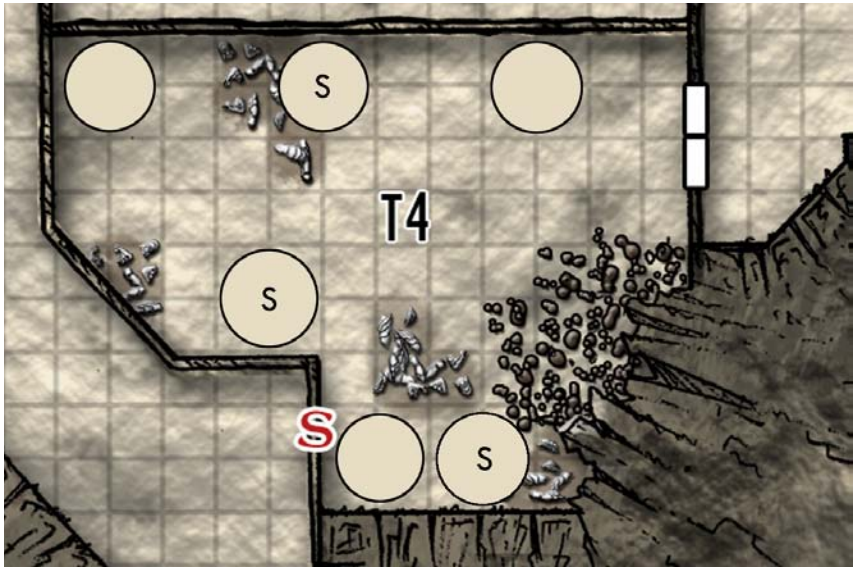
Features of the Area

Illumination: None (dark).

Rubble: Loose rock and gravel spreading from the southeast is difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square).

Armor: The remains of three other steel keepers are piled in the areas indicated on the map. These areas are difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square). In addition, PCs moving through or stopping in one of these areas are subject to attack as armor pieces animate and batter them (+8 vs. Reflex; 1d4 damage and knocked prone). The animated armor does not attack the steel keepers.

3 Steel Keepers	**Level 6 Controller**
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 250 each
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 6, burrow 4	
Halberd (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 4; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends); see also *door guard*.	
Iron Defense (standard; at-will)	
Area burst 1 within 5; affects only creatures in contact with the ground; +9 vs. Reflex; the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Door Guard	
The steel keeper deals an extra 1d6 damage against targets adjacent to the secret door.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+1)



Black Cells

Encounter Level 6 (1,400 XP)

Setup

After centuries of isolation, the zombie hulks trapped here are ravenous but patient. They wait in silence until a PC moves past the bottom of the stairs before they burst out to attack, likely with surprise. The black curtains give the zombie hulks total concealment. Do not place their miniatures until they appear.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

3 zombie hulks (Z)

As the zombies attack, read:

Suddenly the black curtains across the room are torn away by an immense gore-stained fist. A monstrous bloated creature staggers toward you with a bloodcurdling howl.

Tactics

The zombie hulks mindlessly attack the closest foes to start, focusing their wrath on the character who dealt the killing blow when they rise again. If any PCs use the walls as cover, the zombies plow through them (see "Features of the Area"). The zombie hulks pursue the PCs into any part of the complex and fight until slain.

Experience

This encounter awards additional XP for the hazard of the collapsing ceiling. If the fight moves out of this area for more than half its duration, award XP only for the zombies destroyed.

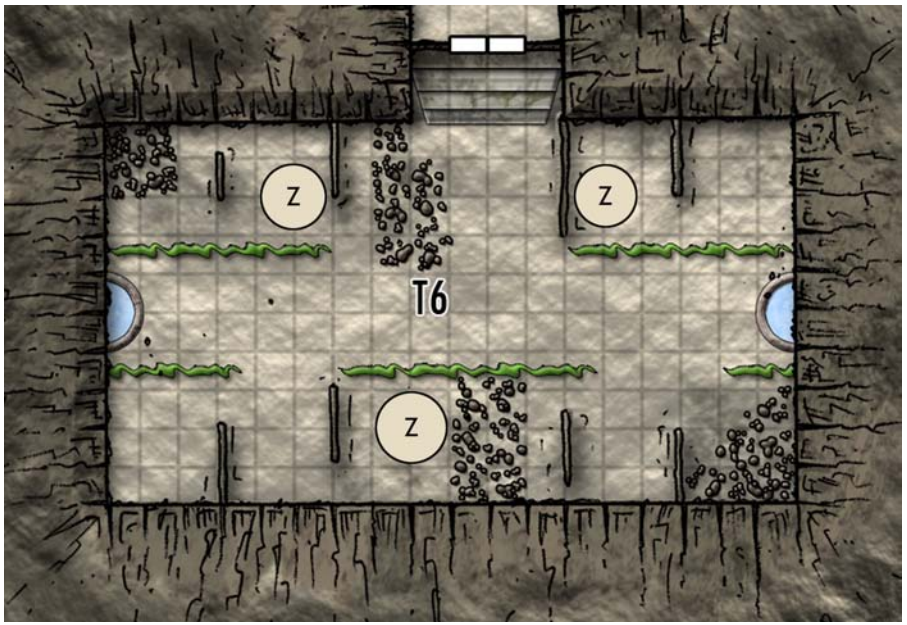
3 Zombie Hulks (Z)	**Level 8 Brute**
Large natural animate (undead)	XP 350 each
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 108; **Bloodied** 54; see also *rise again*	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant	
Speed 4	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.	
⸸ **Zombie Smash** (standard; recharge ⚅)	
Reach 2; targets Medium size or smaller creature; +12 vs. AC; 4d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Rise Again (move; the first time the zombie hulk drops to 0 hit points or fewer; encounter)	
Make a new initiative check for the zombie hulk. On its next turn, the zombie hulk rises (as a move action) with 45 hit points.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 21 (+9)	**Dex** 6 (+2) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 3 (+0)

Features of the Area

Illumination: None (dark).

Black Curtains: These tattered draperies provide total concealment. It takes a DC 5 Strength check to pull a curtain down.

Fountains: The wide basins of these cracked marble fountains stand 6 feet off the ground. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to climb into or over a fountain. A Small character who climbs into a fountain gains cover.



Ruined Walls: These crumbling floor-to-ceiling walls are weak enough that the zombie hulks can push through them. When a wall is pushed over, it makes an attack (+8 vs. Reflex, 1d8 damage on a hit) in two adjacent squares in the direction of the zombie's movement. A zombie hulk knocks over an entire wall regardless of how much of the wall remains, taking 5 damage in the process.

When a wall collapses, the ceiling in the area gives way the following round on the zombie hulks' initiative. The collapse makes an attack in adjacent squares as indicated on the map (+12 vs. Reflex; 3d8 damage on a hit, 1d8 damage on a miss).

Areas of collapse are difficult terrain thereafter.

Last Stand

Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

Setup

The walls alongside the stairs run to the high ceiling overhead, blocking the PCs' view of the human berserkers until they move into their positions on the map.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

2 advanced human berserkers (B)
1 blazing skeleton (S)
1 hobgoblin commander (C)
1 advanced hobgoblin warcaster (W)

Do not place the miniatures for the hobgoblin warcaster, the hobgoblin commander, and the blazing skeleton until they have attacked or the PCs have seen them.

When the first PC passes the top of the stairs, read:

Suddenly, a shout rings out. Two human warriors move around the walls along the stairs, their armor painted with the black fist of Bane.

2 Advanced Human Berserkers (B) Level 5 Brute
Medium natural humanoid XP 200 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38; see also *battle fury*
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15
Speed 7

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16).

↯ **Battle Fury** (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)
The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +5 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.

↛ **Handaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +10
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, greataxe, 2 handaxes, Naarash talisman

Blazing Skeleton (S) Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 200

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
Fiery Aura (**Fire**) aura 1; any creature starts its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.
HP 53; **Bloodied** 26
AC 19; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 6

⊕ **Blazing Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

↛ **Flame Orb** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Hobgoblin Commander (C) Level 5 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32
AC 21 (23 with *phalanx soldier*); **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 5

⊕ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage; see also *lead from the front*. If the hobgoblin commander hits with an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square.

↛ **Tactical Deployment** (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close burst 5; allies in the burst shift 3 squares.

Lead from the Front
When the hobgoblin commander's melee attack hits an enemy, allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until end of the hobgoblin commander's next turn.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin commander suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin commander makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Phalanx Soldier
The hobgoblin commander gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +7, Stealth +11
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment scale armor with Bane's symbol, heavy shield, spear, Naarash talisman

Advanced Hobgoblin Warcaster (W) Level 5 Controller
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31
AC 19; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Staff (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Shock Staff (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Lightning, Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hobgoblin warcaster's next turn.

Force Lure (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Force**
Ranged 5; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 force damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

Force Pulse (standard; recharge ⚃) ✦ **Force**
Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is neither pushed nor knocked prone.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin warcaster suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin warcaster makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Arcana +10, Athletics +4, Stealth +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 19 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Equipment robes, cult tunic, staff, Naarash talisman

Tactics

The human berserkers throw their handaxes from close range. They then wade into combat with their greataxes against the closest foes.

The blazing skeleton is an ageless guardian of this hall, raised by the power of Naarash. It wades into melee if two or more PCs are adjacent and can be affected by its *fiery aura*. Otherwise, it makes ranged *flame orb* attacks from behind cover.

The hobgoblin commander flanks with the berserkers, granting them its *lead from the front* bonus. If the berserkers fall, the commander joins the warcaster to gain the defensive advantage of its *phalanx soldier* power.

The hobgoblin warcaster uses *force pulse* and *force lure* to drive weaker PCs into the berserkers, or to slide powerful combatants into the rift. It enters melee with its *shock staff* if a PC goes past or around the northern wall or if the human berserkers are killed.

Jaryn's personal guard all fight to the death.

Development

The PCs see Jaryn when the fight moves out of the eastern half of the room.

When one of the PCs passes the central wall, read:

To the south, bedrolls surround a cold fire pit. A wide staircase to the west leads up to an altar, an immense red stone glowing there. On the topmost step, a figure stands—a male human, hair tied back to reveal a prominent scar on his cheek. He holds his greatsword beside him, watching your fight with a weary intensity.

If the PCs attack Jaryn at once, the paladin takes total defense or joins with them to defeat his last defenders. This should hopefully give the characters pause at killing him outright, allowing you to reveal his final secrets.

When Jaryn's defenders are defeated, return to page 53 for information on what Jaryn can reveal. Then go to the next tactical encounter for the PCs' final fight.

Features of the Area

See the "Wrath of Naarash" tactical encounter, following.

The Wrath of Naarash

Encounter Level 8 (2,450 XP)

Setup

The PCs have rested and spoken with Jaryn. Now the paladin is anxious to face his fate. This encounter uses the same tactical map as the previous encounter, "Last Stand." Place Jaryn's miniature and the PCs in whatever location their previous conversation left them.

This encounter includes the following creatures:
Jaryn, elite paladin of Bane
Naarash, barlgura demon

When Jaryn finishes speaking to the PCs, read:

The paladin stands, pacing away from you as he hefts his sword. "I have told you what I can, and you now know what you must know to stand in my place—if indeed that is your fate. I commend your bravery, friends. Now let us end this."

Tactics

Jaryn is driven by his twisted faith and the strength granted to him by the Eye of Naarash. He shows no mercy, staying in motion to prevent flanking and focusing his attacks on injured PCs. If he is harried by ranged attacks in the open western half of the room, he tries to move the fight to the east. With his faith in Bane unshakable, Jaryn fights to the death.

Mercy for the Fallen

Altruistic PCs might balk at killing Jaryn outright, instead attempting to talk him back to sanity. If so, improvise a skill challenge alongside the fight. Even as some of the PCs attack Jaryn (or just fend off his attacks), other characters can attempt Bluff or Diplomacy checks. Each successful high-DC check (DC 21) chips away at the paladin's fury and the hold Naarash has on him.

With two defeats, the PCs only manage to enrage Jaryn even more, granting him a +1 on all attacks until the end of the encounter. However, with four successes, Jaryn stops fighting, stumbling back from the fray. He whispers "Pelor forgive me" before tearing the talisman from his neck, killing himself.

Instead of giving an XP reward for this impromptu skill challenge, award full experience points for Jaryn no matter how he is slain.

Development

Whether Jaryn dies at the PCs' hands or his own, the demonic spirit of Naarash has not counted on his new champion falling this way.

When Jaryn falls, read:

The everburning torches suddenly flicker and dim. At the top of the western stairs, the Eye of Naarash flares brighter, a sickly blood-red. Then a fountain of flame erupts from the stone, scouring the upper landing and the ceiling above as a misshapen figure appears. The apelike creature stands 10 feet tall, ropes of twisted muscle rippling beneath its mangy red fur. Its foul voice echoes from the stones as it hisses: "You have slain my champion and have shown your worth. Who among you accepts the mantle of Voice of Naarash?"

Jaryn, Human Paladin	**Level 8 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 700
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +4
HP 164; **Bloodied** 82	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24	
Saving Throws +3	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 damage (plus an additional 2d12 damage on a critical hit)	
Holy Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Divine, Radiant Weapon** Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 radiant damage. If Jaryn marked the target, he deals an additional 3 damage.	
Thunder Smite (standard; encounter; recharges when first bloodied) • **Divine, Thunder, Weapon** Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 2d12 + 9 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone. Can score a critical hit against a marked enemy on a roll of 19-20.	
Valiant Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Divine, Weapon** Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 radiant damage; Jaryn gains a bonus to the attack roll equal to +1 per enemy adjacent to him.	
Divine Strength (minor; encounter) ✦ **Divine** Jaryn applies his Strength bonus (+5) as extra damage on his next attack this turn.	
Divine Challenge (minor; at-will) ✦ **Divine, Radiant** Close burst 5; targets one creature; the target is marked until Jaryn uses this power against another target. If the target makes an attack that doesn't include Jaryn as a target, the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and 6 radiant damage.	
Bane's Rebuke (immediate reaction) When Jaryn is hit by a melee attack, he makes a basic attack.	
Second Wind (standard; encounter) **Healing** Jaryn spends a healing surge and regains 41 hit points. He gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of his next turn.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Supernal
Str 20 (+9)	**Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 10 (+4)	**Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Feats Human Perseverance, Improved Initiative, Ritual Caster	
Equipment +2 *vicious greatsword*	

The demon is not known for its patience, and the PCs cannot stall for long before refusing the offer. (If one of the PCs decides to accept Naarash's offer, the adventure is over and you're on your own.)

When Naarash attacks, read:

The demon's tusked mouth opens in a howl as it leaps down the stairs toward you.

Naarash's dark life force is tied to the great stone in which the demon was bound millennia before. It has the ability to manifest in this chamber but cannot leave it. Having waited endless centuries for a chance to renew its power in the world through the Hand of Naarash, the demon has no intention of allowing the PCs to thwart its plans.

Tactics

Naarash wades into the PCs with vicious double slam attacks, reserving both uses of its *tormenting howl* for the maximum number of targets. If the PCs spread out, the demon is happy to focus its attacks on a single foe, cutting the party down one by one. When bloodied, Naarash attempts to stay in the midst of as many foes as possible, maximizing the effect of its *demonic frenzy*. The insane demon knows only rage and the thirst for destruction, and it fights until destroyed.

Development

The Eye of Naarash is destroyed when the demon falls. Incorporate this into Naarash's *death burst*.

Even as the demon is slain, the stone on the altar flares again, blood-red light blinding you. With a shriek like rending steel, the Eye of Naarash shatters, its fragments cascading down the stairs to dissolve into blood-red mist. When it clears, a smoking stain on the floor is all that marks the place where the demon fell.

Naarash, Barlgura	**Level 8 Solo Brute**
Large elemental beast (demon)	XP 1,750
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 360; **Bloodied** 180	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19	
Saving Throws +4	
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter; see *MM* 282)	
Speed 8, climb 8	
Action Points 2	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2, +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, or 2d8 + 6 damage if the barlgura is bloodied.	
⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The barlgura makes two slam attacks (see above).	
Tormenting Howl (minor; encounter)	
All enemies within 5 squares of Naarash take a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.	
Bloodied Torment (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)	
Naarash recharges and uses *tormenting howl*.	
Demonic Frenzy (immediate reaction, when attacked by an adjacent enemy while bloodied; at-will)	
Naarash makes a frenzied slam attack against the enemy: +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.	
✧ **Death Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Fire**	
Naarash explodes in a burst of flame: close burst 10; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d8+5 fire damage. *Miss:* Half damage. The demon and the Eye of Naarash are destroyed.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal
Skills Athletics +15	
Str 22 (+10)	**Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 6 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+5)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Everburning torches (bright 5) along all walls.

Rubble: Loose rock and gravel spreading from the south is difficult terrain.

Fissure: The floor of this chamber collapses into a fissure 10 feet deep. It can be jumped with a DC 20 Athletics check (DC 10 with a 2-square running start). Characters who enter the fissure take 1d6 damage and must make a DC 18 Acrobatics or Athletics check to clamber up its crumbling walls.

Bedrolls and Fire Pit: These are difficult terrain.

Ruined Shrine: This shrine is 10 feet high. It provides superior cover to anyone behind it and can be scaled with a DC 10 Athletics check.

The Eye of Naarash: This immense chunk of blood-red stone sits atop a circular black altar, glowing with a diffuse red light.

Stairs: The oversized staircases in this chamber are difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square).

Fountain Pool: The pool of water and the wet floor around it are difficult terrain.

Treasure: The equipment carried by Jaryn can be recovered after the PCs are victorious.

About the Author

Scott Fitzgerald Gray (9th-level layabout, vindictive neutral) started gaming in high school and has worked as a writer and editor much of the time since then. After belatedly realizing he could combine both vocations in 2004, he's been making up for lost time as a freelance RPG editor and designer, primarily for Wizards of the Coast. He lives in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two daughters, and a large number of animal companions.

HEROIC
1–10

by Matthew Sernett

Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams

illustrations by Nicole Cardiff and James Zhang ✦ cartography by Sean Macdonald

Something stirs in the dark heart of the Warwood, and in response something stirs in the stars. A simple encounter with bandits on the road leads the PCs to a frightening place where even dreams are deadly.

"Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams" is an adventure designed for five 8th-level PCs. PCs who complete the adventure should reach 9th level at its end or shortly before. Scaling the adventure for more or fewer PCs is easy, as is scaling the adventure for higher- or lower-level characters. Consult Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for

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specific advice on reaching the desired experience total for your party. Traps and other noncombat elements can probably remain unchanged, but if you feel that a particular encounter is too difficult (or too easy), don't hesitate to decrease the challenge (or increase it, for that matter).

Adventure Background

Just over a hundred years ago, two armies met in a cataclysmic conflict that threatened to destroy both sides. An evil paladin favored by his deity led one force. At the head of the other army stood something worse—a creature of greater wickedness whose master possessed far darker aims for the world. Knowing that a battle between the assembled hosts would devastate both, the leaders met in single combat. The loser's army would forfeit the field and disband. The result was a fluke of fate: The evil generals killed one another simultaneously.

A century later, much of the true history of these events has been forgotten or intentionally destroyed. The haunted forest known as the Warwood and an out-of-the-way monastery are the only reminders that something significant occurred in the area. Now a cult threatens to return one of the evil generals to the world, and if the PCs don't stop it, something far worse will follow on the general's heels.

Recent Developments

The penitents of the monastery are making a pilgrimage to the scene of their hero's death. There they intend to anoint and bury his effigy to honor him as their order was instructed by Achreisis, exarch of the Raven Queen, a century ago.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are traveling down the road and meet a pilgrimage of Raven Queen worshipers. Although ignorant of the import of their actions, the faithful of the god of fate are taking the bones of the evil paladin, Sir Malagant, to the site of his death to perform a ritual that uses his soul to seal a Far Realm entity out of the world for another century. An attack on the pilgrims and theft by bandits propels the PCs into the Warwood and to the Tomb of Dreams. There, cultists are attempting to awaken the Sleeper, the general who killed Sir Malagant and was killed in return. In the tomb, the PCs must face myriad traps and foes to interrupt the ritual and retrieve the bones for the Raven Queen's faithful.

Preparing for Adventure

The adventure assumes the PCs are traveling north on a road by the Warwood, so it should be easy to fit this adventure into an ongoing campaign. The Warwood could be a forest of a hundred acres or a hundred square miles. It could even be part of a larger forest, so you should be able to fit it in wherever you like. The north-south road might be a zig-zagging part of a road that travels east to west, so the PCs can be traveling to anywhere you like. It doesn't even need to be winter. Because this adventure reaches out and grabs the PCs, you can use it when the PCs are on their way to someplace else or on a different quest.

If you'd like a way to give the adventure a more personal connection to the PCs, consider the following ideas for hooks and quests.

Hook: Damsel in Distress?

A PC's relative or friend wrote to the PC concerning her daughter, Sierra. Always something of a hellion, the girl got mixed up with some of the town's unsavory elements, and now she has disappeared. Her mother found a diary in her daughter's bedroom that talked in strange terms about nightly stargazing and an upcoming trip to the Warwood. She is concerned that her daughter has gotten in over her head. Her letter describes Sierra and begs the PC to bring her home.

Sierra has joined the cult, and she's done some terrible things, but she's not beyond redemption. Of course, she's not going anywhere without a fight. Choose one of the humans or tieflings in the adventure to represent Sierra.

Alternative: Sierra rejected the cult once she fully understood their evil, and now she is a captive in the torture chamber. The cultists are trying to forcibly convert Sierra by turning her into a foulspawn, and they've had success, which makes Sierra initially reject the PCs' attempts to return her to her mother. ("I can't go back! Not like this!")

Quest XP: 1,750 XP if the PCs bring back Sierra alive.

Hook: The Stars Aren't Right

A PC in the party (preferably a warlock) has been having disturbing dreams. In them a skull larger than

the moon gazes down from the night sky. Its cold gaze chills the PC to the bone but the PC isn't frightened until a bloody sluglike creature that must be the size of a mountain pushes its way out a gap between the skull's clenched teeth. More and more of these slugs crawl out of the skull and make bloody trails over its face. Soon it seems like the skull will burst from all the slugs struggling to escape, and just as that thought crosses the PC's mind, it explodes. Behind the skull, the PC catches a glimpse of an unfamiliar constellation of thirteen stars before the bloody slug things rain down upon the world like a million falling stars, obscuring the night sky with fire.

Last night, the dream changed. Rather than ending with the PC in a cold sweat and bolt upright in bed after the explosion of fire in the sky, it continued. The PC fled into the woods, running madly to escape the exploding crashes of things from the sky burrowing mile-long furrows into the ground. As the PC ran, an explosion ahead brought the PC up short. Unable to resist investigating the glowing crater, the PC looked within and saw the shape of a face burned in the ground. Inside the face's mouth was a large book opened to pages with words written in blood. Before the PC could read the words, the dream ended.

Alternative: The thing in the face's mouth could be the *Dreamstone Maul* or the *Dreamstone Amulet*. Use this alternative if those options are more appropriate items for the PC to wield.

Quest XP: 350 XP if the PC reads the Bloody Book.

The Adventure Begins

Once your players understand their characters' motivation for traveling on the road by the Warwood, the game can begin. Begin by reading through the description of Exterior 1 and progress through the adventure from there.

What You Need to Play

This adventure includes the encounters the PCs face as they explore and adventure in the region. It also provides tactical maps and more for the adventure. Both you and your players should read through the Dungeons & Dragons *4th Edition rules*. Before play, make certain you understand the rules. Also read through at least the first few encounters described in this adventure before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation.

Exterior 1. Brigands

The PCs are traveling north during winter using a road that follows the border of a tangled wood purportedly haunted by the restless dead of an ancient war. Hence, its name: The Warwood.

Sun glistens off new snow, making a stunning contrast to the tangled darkness of the forest next to the road. Ahead you spot a large group of travelers approaching, both on foot and by horse-drawn wagon. They appear well dressed in white and black robes, and in a moment you can hear the mournful sound of their distant chanting. It is a sort of religious pilgrimage.

Allow the PCs to react as they like. The priests and acolytes in the pilgrimage have seen the PCs and continue to approach at the same pace. If the PCs somehow look hostile, the pilgrimage stops out of bowshot and their leader, Sister Naenia, shouts to the PCs to discern their intentions. Otherwise, the pilgrimage approaches to within 30 feet and Sister Naenia addresses the PCs in a friendlier fashion

The pilgrims are faithful of the Raven Queen, something obvious once the PCs take a good look at their vestments and the skulls and ravens that adorn their wagons. There are two wagons. The first is open to the air and carries three white-haired old women and an albino girl of about eight years old. They are heavily bundled against the cold and each wears the vestments of an acolyte. The second wagon looks like a funeral wagon, with open sides beneath a heavily ornamented roof. Behind sheer black curtains the PCs can see a masked figure lying atop a bed. Between the wagons walk a number of priests and acolytes, the hems of their robes stained with mud from the journey.

These people, mostly human but with a few half-elves among them, are virtually all the faithful from a Raven Queen monastery about forty miles distant. The monastery is hidden away in a wood that has grown up around it since its construction over a hundred years ago. It's off the beaten path because it honors a little-known hero of their order, Sir Malagant.

Sir Malagant fought many battles against enemies of the faith and died within a few miles of where the PCs and priests meet on the road. Just over a hundred years ago, a terrible war raged through the area, with the forces of humanity on one side, and an evil cult and allied monsters arrayed against them. On the eve of what would be the largest battle yet fought, Sir Malagant challenged his foes' leader to single combat,

with the loser vowing to abandon the field and disperse his army. The two combatants killed each other, however, and thus both sides lost the conflict. This stunning result led to some fighting but the leaderless armies did soon disband, and peace has held sway over this wilderness since those days. The penitents of the monastery are making a pilgrimage to the scene of their hero's death. There they intend to anoint and bury his effigy to honor him as their order was instructed by Achreisis, exarch of the Raven Queen, a century ago.

Sister Naenia relates these facts to the PCs when she talks to them. Naenia is a handsome, raven-haired woman of about forty who comfortably holds authority over the monastery. She's pleased to meet the PCs since she suspected from their appearance they might be brigands. She's happy to have the PCs follow her train or to wave them on their way.

Feel free to roleplay this scenario out to tell as much of the pilgrims' story as you like, but at some point—particularly if the players seem interested in something Sister Naenia is about to say—the albino girl abruptly stands up in the foremost wagon and looks to the Warwood.

Tactical Encounter: "Brigands" (page 79).

Just then, a heretofore unnoticed flock of crows raucously rises from the woods and flies overhead to the west, interrupting Naenia. The three old women cluster around the albino girl and in rapid succession, each takes a turn looking toward the wood over the head of the girl. Sister Naenia looks startled and rushes back to the wagon to question them. Turn to the tactical encounter to determine the outcome.

History Check: Sister Naenia's story might jog a PC's memory about a tale read about the area. A successful DC 15 History check gives the version of the story described in The Setting. If asked about the "evil paladin," Sister Naenia seems confused and upset by the idea. She has always known Sir Malagant as a hero of the order and she can relate many stories of his honorable character.

After the Encounter: After you've run the encounter, return here.

All traces of the calm confidence Sister Naenia possessed before have fled. She is clearly distraught over the harm that has come to her followers, but there's more to it than that. You see fear in her eyes.

"They took it! That beast flew off with his bones! Sweet Lady! Please you must help us. You must get the effigy back! It holds Sir Malagant's bones and the Fiend's Horn. If we don't bury him . . . I don't know. I just don't know."

Sister Naenia spins in a panicked circle, starting toward the wrecked funeral wagon, then toward a wounded pilgrim, then toward the woods. She seems incapable of deciding what to do.

Allow the PCs to take control of the situation. It's clear that none of these monastery-bound priests have been in a battle and few know anything about treating a wound. Sister Naenia is useless until the PCs help her out of her panic (three successful skill checks, in any combination, to snap her out of it: DC 20 Intimidate or DC 25 Diplomacy).

Once she has calmed down a bit, Sister Naenia relates what she understands of the situation. She believes the attack at the front of the train was a distraction for someone to steal the valuable relics they placed with the effigy. She begs the PCs to retrieve the bones of Sir Malagant that were placed within the effigy and the relic they call the Fiend's Horn. If they do this, Sister Naenia says they can keep the adornments on the effigy, including Sir Malagant's armor and sword.

She's desperate to bury his bones and the Horn so that they can fulfill the order of her deity's exarch. She doesn't know why it must be done, but she's certain something grave will happen if it's not done soon—within a week at most.

If the PCs haggle for more, she looks exasperated, but promises the coffers of her monastery (another 400 gp) if the PCs retrieve the bones and relic. If the PCs accept this additional bounty, Naenia lets them know it will ruin the monastery and make them destitute, but she is grimly willing to give it to them.

The Fiend's Horn is said to be the actual horn from the head of Sir Malagant's foe, struck off with Sir Malagant's dying blow. It looks like a foot-long bone horn with a bit of skull attached to the end from when Sir Malagant's sword clove through the Fiend's head. Sister Naenia knows that Sir Malagant's longsword was magic, but she doesn't know how. She doesn't think his scale armor held magic. His effigy has other valuable decorations, worth about 900 gp, although it angers Naenia if the PCs demand this information.

When the PCs agree, Sister Naenia asks them to swear in the name of the Raven Queen that they will return with the bones and the Fiend's Horn. If a PC does, she seems relieved and blesses the PC, saying, "Fate be with you." If a PC doesn't, she sadly turns away. See **An Oath to the Queen** for details about what this promise means for the adventurer.

Sister Naenia suggests the PCs set out at once through the Warwood to follow the bandits' trail through the snow before wind or fresh snow obscures it. The forest is too thick and tangled for horses, but pilgrims offer to watch over them. Sister Naenia remains behind to tend to her followers and then

Designer's Note: Sybil and the Augurs

Do with this what you will. My inclination would be to reintroduce the PCs to Sybil and her augurs later on in the campaign, perhaps in a kind of plot that pits the PCs against followers of the Raven Queen. The return of these eerie and iconic figures in the role of prescient villains or as neutral advisors to a villain could be a lot of fun. If the campaign progresses over years of game-world time, you could even have Sybil return as a villain in her own right, perhaps attended by the three flaming skulls or the ghosts of the old women she eventually murdered so they would forever remain by her side.

There she intends to wait with her followers. The hill is one the PCs passed on their route and that they can find by traveling south on the road.

As the PCs are leaving, the albino girl runs after them to tug on the sleeve of one, motioning that he or she should bend down to hear her whisper. If the PC does so, she whispers the following:

"Those who dream beneath the stars cannot yet be seen by the blind one who waits beyond them. The stars are safe for now."

The girl then runs back to the three old women who are standing some distance away and looking at the PCs with inscrutable expressions. Should the PCs try to speak to them, they say nothing. If they ask about the elderly women, they are told that the three are the monastery's augurs. They look for portents in the natural world. One day their auguries led them to the girl, Sibyl, whom they found as a baby in a worg den. Since then they have lived in the monastery and provided tidings about weather and crops.

The players can't know it yet, but Sybil's warning is an obscure hint about the danger of sleeping in the Tomb of Dreams. See the Sleeping in the Tomb of Dreams sidebar (page 70) for details.

Exterior 2: Into the Woods

It's not hard to follow the bandits' trail, but the snow has drifted in the woods and the tangled brush makes for slow going. The Warwood is silent as only a snow-shrouded forest can be. The PCs can hear the quiet crunch of their own footsteps, the crack of branches they push out of the way, and the occasional rustle of snow falling from the barren trees.

The PCs have an hour-long walk ahead of them. If they follow the trail, they make their way to a deer trail through the woods that the cultists took that makes travel easier. They also inevitably encounter the frozen creek and Encounter 2. If they travel off the trail, they shouldn't get lost as long as they keep the bandit's trail in sight, but see The Warwood sidebar (page 65) for how to add some extra interest to their wanderings.

Tactical Encounter: "Warwood Creek" (page 81).

The PCs' foes in this adventure, cultists dedicated to resurrecting the Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams, are lying in wait at the frozen creek. There they hoped to either greet returning allies or ambush foes. Yet the cultists have had a long wait, and they've grown lax in their duties. Although they remain hidden and silent, one of them has lit a pipe and another has fallen asleep.

PCs following the trail encounter a bit of a clearing around a creek frozen over with ice and dusted with snow. Read or paraphrase the following.

The trail you've been following and the bandit's tracks lead to an opening in the tangled forest. Ahead in a small dell you see sunshine glimmer off ice. The bandits' trail crosses a frozen creek and heads up the other side of the dell into the woods. It's hard to know how deep the creek might be below the ice.

Perception Check (DC 20): Check the passive Perception scores of the each of the PCs. If any of them exceed DC 20, inform the player that the

An Oath to the Queen

A PC who swears in the name of the Raven Queen to retrieve the Fiend's Horn and bones of Sir Malagant receives a strange boon from the god of death and fate. The first time the PC takes an attack that would reduce the PC to 0 hit points, the PC appears to take the attack (for example, the sword blade still pierces and the PC still feels the pain), but takes no damage. When this happens, the world appears to freeze, and the PC receives a vision of a raven landing nearby. The raven cocks its head questioningly at the PC and caws three times. If the PC somehow reasserts the desire to retrieve the horn and bones, the attack deals no damage and the PC regains hit points equal to its second wind value. Then time flows again as if nothing happened. If the PC does not show comprehension of the raven, attempts to take an action (other than a free action to reassert the oath), or denies the raven's strange query, the raven caws angrily and flies off, leaving the PC to suffer the fate the dice decreed.

The Warwood

The Warwood's gnarled trees, tangled thickets, and lonesomeness would cause anyone to think it haunted—even without its restless dead. Those who died in the brief conflict after Sir Malagant and the Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams killed one another still linger in the forest. The battle after the generals' deaths broke the compact they had made about their final battle, and the souls of those who died in those battles are cursed by the Raven Queen to remain in the Warwood forever.

These undead arise whenever blood is spilt within the boundaries of the forest. This fact makes the forest safer in some regards because predatory beasts are rare, but it can prove bedeviling to PCs. If a PC scratches a hand on a branch or tears skin on thorns, zombies emerge from ponds, skeletons assemble from scattered bones, and wraiths appear out of thin air.

Should the PCs go off course during their trip through the Warwood (or if you just want more atmosphere), have them stumble across haunting remnants of the past: a rusted axe head embedded in a tree with a skull sitting atop the blade, a PC's foot getting stuck in a human ribcage hidden beneath the snow, or a PC banging a shin on a rusted shield. Then, when the time is right, spring an encounter on the PCs by making up a reason for a PC to bleed a little (the banged shin, a thorny branch that scrapes a face, a hand that carelessly presses against an old arrowhead embedded in a tree).

The encounter could be any encounter with undead appropriate to the PCs' level, but try to make the connection to the bloodshed apparent: If skeletons attack, perhaps a skeletal hand bursts up from the pristine white snow to grab at the drop of crimson blood that spoiled it.

Below are some encounter options appropriate to five 8th-level PCs.

- 4 flameskulls and 5 blazing skeletons
- 1 wailing ghost and 6 specters
- 1 skull lord, 8 skeletons, and 3 boneshard skeletons
- 1 spirit devourer and 2 zombie hulks

character smells pipe smoke after reading the read aloud text.

After the Encounter: If any of the cultists escape, they run directly for the hill, where they face the PCs again (see "Battle on Stargazer Hill" on page 83).

Exterior 3: The Face in the Hill

The bandits' trail eventually leads to a clearing around a hill in the Warwood. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive on the scene.

Ahead a hill pushes up from the forest within a large clearing. Atop the face of the hill is the enormous carving of a bearded stone face staring skyward with open mouth and empty eye sockets. Two statues stand near it, each a cloaked figure with face and arms raised to the sky. A third one lies broken on the ground near its base. Two leafless trees grow near the face as well, each looking even more twisted and dark than the other trees you've seen in this haunted forest.

Volkanth warned the cultists here that survivors of the attack might follow him, so they are on alert and hiding atop the hill. Volkanth's mount and some other cultists are inside the hill (down through the mouth).

Roll for the Stealth of the cultists on the hill and for their Perception to work out which group sees the other first.

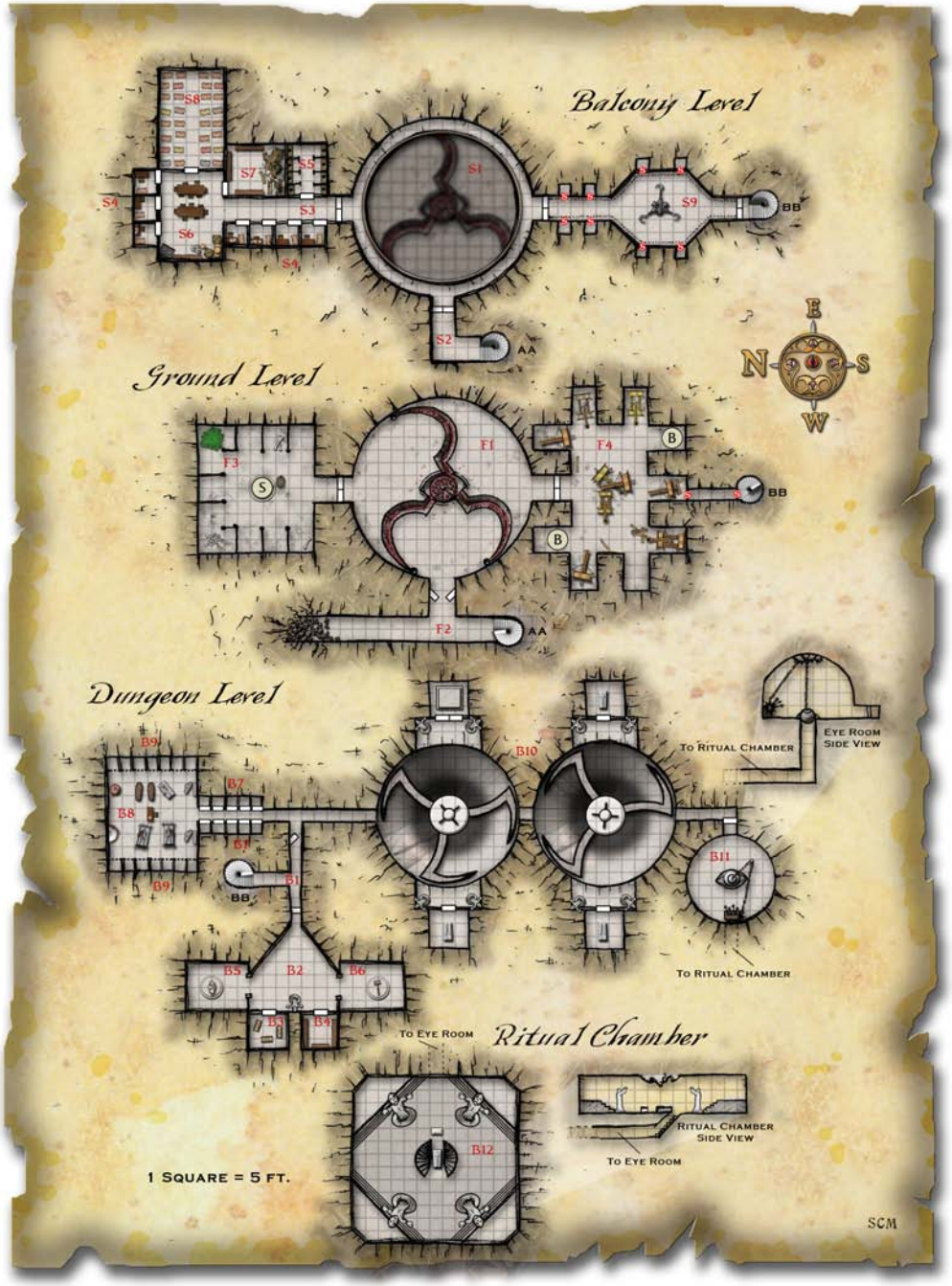
Tactical Encounter: "Battle on Stargazer Hill" (page 83).

Treasure: None. However, the tieflings and humans have some cheap jewelry and personal effects.

Interior

The Tomb of Dreams was built nearly a hundred years ago after the Sleeper died in battle against Sir Malagant. The Sleeper's devoted followers constructed for their lord a kind of temple tomb. Believing that the Sleeper would one day awaken, they maintained guardianship over his body and belongings, keeping the materials he would need to restart the war they had been fighting. Over time, however, some of his followers lost faith. Infighting and power struggles tore the cult apart and drove the last elements of his army to the four winds. The Tomb of Dreams was abandoned.

One member of the cult kept the faith. It haunted her thoughts by day and her dreams by night. This woman was grandmother to Volkanth. While she could not convince her grandson to follow her faith, her stories of the heroism of the Sleeper and the glory he heralded inspired him. There was power to be gained beneath the hill in the Warwood and dreams of that power gradually transformed to visions of where to go and what to do. Thus, Volkanth gathered a new cult together.



The Tomb of Dreams has two main floors accessible from the chamber beneath the mouth in the hill, and there is a third level beneath both. The rooms level with the bottom of the chamber beneath the mouth (F1) are referred to as the first floor (hence F). The rooms level with the balcony around the chamber beneath the mouth (S1) are referred to as the second floor (hence S). The level beneath both, which is reached only by a descending spiral stair accessed through the second floor, are called the basement.

Features of the Tomb of Dreams

Unless otherwise specified by an area's description, the Tomb of Dreams features have the following characteristics.

Stone Doors: Doors are typically unlocked; the doors have 80 hit points, AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, and a break DC 25.

Walls: Walls are carved from bedrock or paneled with stone (DC 20 Climb).

Floor: The floor is smoothly flagged with stone.

Ceilings: Ceilings are 10 feet high.

F1. The Chamber of Sacrifice

In the center of the floor of this room, hundreds of 6-inch spikes stab into the air, directly beneath the aperture in the domed ceiling 70 feet above. If the PCs climb up to the balcony level to check things out before moving on, see Area S1.

Hundreds of 6-inch spikes stab into the air from the center of this grand chamber. The spikes are arranged in a circle, forming the white of a huge eye shape carved in the floor. Extending from this eye shape are three angled channels that run to drains near the wall. The eye shape lies directly beneath the aperture in the domed ceiling high above. Clearly, the darkly stained channels were meant to siphon the blood from victims hurled down through the mouth in the face on the hill. But where the blood would go and why this would be done is unclear. A balcony surrounds this wide circular room, cloaking the walls in gloom, but you can make out images carved in the walls that dully glimmer at various points, and you see that a band of stone with writing runs beneath them.

The walls of the room are carved with images showing the great achievements of the Sleeper. The story is told starting on the walls to the south side of the doors to the west (Area F2) and runs widdershins around the room to the north side of those doors. The first image is of a tall, cloaked figure standing on cliff prominence and looking down upon a village. The face is obscured, but horns project out of the figure's hood and it holds a great maul in its hands. The next images show the cloaked and horned figure, the Sleeper, converting others to follow behind him, either by threat or speeches given to crowds. The middle images show the figure and his allies in battle with elves, humans, and dwarves. The final images show the figure in battle with a frightening knight encased in scale armor decorated with skulls, bones, and wailing ghosts. In this image, the knight is stabbing the belly of the cloaked figure, and the cloaked figure is slamming the side of the knight's head with his maul.

Dully Glimmering Points: All the depictions of the cloaked figure's maul are formed of a darker stone inset into the wall. The semitransparent black stone is swirled with phosphorescent material. This stone is not familiar to anyone, even dwarves that might be in the party. It is dreamstone, an onyxlike rock that can be found plentifully beneath the Tomb of Dreams. Dreamstone sometimes appears in places that have a connection to the Far Realm, and although it has no inherent quality other than a dim glow (1 square radius, even in large quantities), it tends to absorb disturbing effects. A piece of dreamstone has no set value, but a jeweler might pay as much as 1 gp for one of the maul pieces. However, wearing dreamstone results in it absorbing nightmares of the wearer and fueling their repetition, so dreamstone swiftly loses value once this property is known. If a PC touches one of the stones, see the Perception Check for this location.

Perception Check (DC 20): If a PC touches the dreamstone in any of the maul depictions (such as when trying to pry one out), the PC catches movement on the wall out of the corner of an eye. Have the PC make a DC 20 Perception check. If the PC succeeds, he or she notices that that a nearby image has changed: A few of the cloaked figure's allies now have no eyes and droplets of blood appear to be forming on the wall like tears beneath the eyes. Also, one or two in the group have tentacles instead of arms. A PC that fails the Perception check or stops touching the dreamstone sees nothing unusual.

Writing Band: The band of stone around the room is writing in Common. It says the following, "Where did He come from? Our dreams. Why did He come? We called. From our sleep came the Sleeper. He opened our dreaming eyes by shutting our waking ones. His defeat was but another sleep and waking Him our dream."

Dungeoneering Check (DC 20): A PC examining the words around the room notes that the stone of the letters appears polished while dark stains have collected between them. A successful Dungeoneering check allows the PC to realize that this likely resulted from people rubbing their hands along the words. Dwarves experienced with living in dwarven cities gain a +2 bonus to the check. The significance to this shouldn't be clear to the PCs, but the reason is that many cultists put out their eyes to better commune with the Sleeper and in their blindness they still wanted to read his words.

Eye Spikes: Being knocked prone on the eye spikes causes 1d10 damage. This damage is built into the damage for falling from the mouth of the face in the hill.

Channels: The channels are sickle shaped, which is something easily noted from above or with some examination by a PC on the ground. The two sickles projecting from the bottom of the eye point toward each other, and the sickle on top points to the left. The PCs cannot know this yet, but this is the symbol of That Which Waits Beyond the Stars.

Drains: Each drain flows to a pipe roughly 3 inches in diameter. The pipes run down to area B12 after first collecting in a dreamstone well between F1 and B12, which is 40 feet below. There shouldn't be any means of traveling through these pipes, but the pool of blood in the well is deadly and should convince any PC that it's the wrong way to go. See "The Sleeper's Tomb" for details on what the stored blood does to the unfaithful it touches.

F2. The Blocked Exit

This hall once led to a distant cave entrance in the Warwood. Through here the cultists entered their temple-tomb, and through here they fled when abandoning the temple. The hall collapsed roughly fifty years ago (DC 15 Dungeoneering check for a PC to understand this). The spiral stairs in this area lead up to area S2.

F3. Stables

The cultists used this room as a stable in the temple-tomb's heyday. The various stalls have little left in them but a few horse bones and the barest remains of hay strewn about. Volkanth's mount, the hippogriff, had been using the northeast stall, and it is strewn with evergreen boughs culled from a distant part of the forest. The most significant feature is the dais

in the center of the room and the skeletal beast that stands upon it.

Decaying wooden walls separate this room into stalls. Clearly it was used as a stable at some time. You take this in with a glance, then see a circular dais in the center atop which stands the motionless skeleton of a horse covered with dust and cobwebs. Beside the dais is a post with a saddle on top of it, similarly dusty and webbed.

The horse skeleton is undead—the Sleeper's mount awaiting his return. However, the skeletal horse takes no action and does not even move until attacked or until someone places the saddle on its back.

If a PC places the saddle on the skeletal horse, it stomps a foot and shakes its head, and then looks to the PC. Until its destruction, the skeletal horse serves the PC as a normal horse would except that it is willing to travel in enclosed spaces. The PC now has a loyal undead mount! Of course, taking it out of the tomb might be tricky, and most people would react poorly to seeing this mount on the road.

Sleeper's Skeletal Warhorse (S)	**Level 5 Brute**
Large natural animate (mount, undead)	XP 200
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Speed 10	
(+) **Kick** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.	
Shadow Symbiosis (while mounted by a friendly rider of 5th level or higher) ✦ **Mount**	
The horse's rider gains resist 10 necrotic.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 7 (+0)

If the PCs attack the skeletal mount, it fights them to the death. There is no tactical encounter for this fight. Use the statistics here and the map of the first floor.

F4. Siege Weapon Room

This room contains the remains of siege weapons from the Sleeper's war. The cultists placed them here to give the Sleeper's renewed war effort a head start. Most of them have decayed over time due to neglect, but a couple are constructs left to guard the room.

In the musty darkness of this large room lurk siege engines. Small catapults and large ballistae slump in the center of the room and huddle in alcoves in the walls. Their ropes have broken over time, and their metal parts are rusted.

If the PCs do not investigate the room further, nothing happens here, but PCs who wander in see that a couple of the ballistae appear intact. Closer inspection reveals that it appears they weren't constructed

Arcane Ballista (B)	**Level 6 Artillery**
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15	
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison, sleep; **Resist** 5 to all damage	
Speed 6	
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.	
(+) **Lightning Shot** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
Ranged 20; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 lightning damage.	
✲ **Lightning Burst** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
Area burst 2 within 20; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 lightning damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 3 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

to be strung—moving parts other than the wheels appear ornamental. If a PC touches either ballistae (marked as B on the map), the ballistae both come to life of their own accord and attack. These ballistae are constructs left in place with instructions to attack any creature that possesses eyes that disturbs them or the other siege engines in the room.

The ballistae fight until destroyed. There is no tactical encounter for this fight. Use the statistics here and the map of the first floor.

S1. The Balcony

The balcony runs around the entire domed chamber 15 feet off the ground.

You stand on a balcony that encircles this chamber. Below on the floor is an emblem that resembles a spike-filled eye with three sickle shapes projecting from it. Above you is the domed roof and the opening to the sky through which you descended. The dome shows cracks in places and water trickles down from spots where the two great trees on the hill have projected their roots into the abyss. Also above is a constellation of dimly glowing points—the roof of the chamber bears a star chart, with each star foiled with gold. Nearer to hand you spy words in Common carved into the wall that runs around the circumference of the room, and each raised letter is polished with grime collecting in the crevasses. Noting the polish, you then see that half of the wide stone banister running around the room possesses a similar smoothness.

PCs examining this portion of the domed chamber can discover a number of intriguing details.

Writing Band: The writing around this room is at the same height as the balcony, which means that a PC must walk around the whole chamber to read

it. It says, "The Sleeper is the herald. His dreams call to That Which Waits Beyond the Stars. When the Sleeper is awoken, He will dream again."

Dungeoneering Check (DC 20): A PC examining the words might note what caused their odd polish. See the Dungeoneering check in Area F1 for details. A similar polish from wear has affected the banister.

Arcana or Nature Check (DC 24): Although all the PCs see the star chart on the ceiling of the room, it takes an especially clever PC to understand that one could use the star chart and light coming through the aperture in the ceiling as a kind of calendar.

Realizing this might give a player the idea that the calendar is tracking something. If so, inform the player that the character realizes that star chart would roughly approximate the night sky visible in winter (or whatever you chose as the season), whereas spring would bring other stars up into the horizon of the room's depiction.

Nature or Arcana Check (DC 28): Allow a PC who examines the star chart on the ceiling to realize that there is a constellation of thirteen stars visible that cannot be seen in the night sky. Warlocks with star powers gain a +2 bonus to this check.

If the players make the leap that the star chart and aperture might form a kind of calendar, let them know that the foreign grouping of stars lies directly where the moon's light would strike the wall that night.

S2. Hall to Stairs

These spiral stairs lead down to S1.

S3. Hall to Cultist Quarters

This hall leads to where the cultists lived when the temple was first built. The new cultists have renovated it for their use.

When you open a door to this wide hall, the scents of unwashed bodies and cooked meals hit your nose. Several doors line the east wall of the hall and one stands on the west. To the north you see a large room dimly lit by firelight from around the corner and a guttering lamp on a table.

No enemies are currently in this area, but feel free to prey on the PCs' caution by having them hear rustling noises in one of the rooms or ahead in the dimly lit common room. Perhaps it's a rat scurrying about in the cultists' absence, or maybe one of the cultists keeps a pet cat.

S4. Bedchamber

Each of these rooms is a bedchamber for one of the senior members of the cult. Because the old beds in the room were rotted, they have been cleared out and bedrolls have been spread on the floor instead. Each room has a bedroll, a pack or bag with various personal belongings, and perhaps a rickety chair and desk.

Pick one of the rooms for a grisly discovery. In it is a small heap of bloody bandages of various ages, and the bedroll shows signs of bloodstains as well. This is the room of the Seer who is now in Area B8. The bandages are those he uses to wrap around his back after flagellating himself.

Heal Check (DC 20): A PC who picks up and examines the bloody bandages can make a Heal check to determine that the bandages and the blood in the bedroll are consistent with someone who has been injured in the torso area. This fact is unimportant by itself, but it might tip off the PCs to the danger of the Seer in Area B8.

Treasure: Each of these rooms has personal belonging of the occupant (backpack, dagger, clothes, shaving razor, hand mirror, pipe tobacco, comb, candles, or other similar items). In addition, some rooms might have the occupant's money (400 gp in total).

One room additionally has the effigy's jewelry and ceremonial mask (worth 900 gp). These items have been hastily stuffed into the foot of Volkanth's bedroll.

Feel free to put whatever else you like in the rooms, including items that might be adventure hooks or plot points for later adventures (a map of where to find a secret room in the sewers of a nearby city, a mysterious key that doesn't unlock anything in this adventure, or a diary that describes the person's induction into the cult and that slowly progresses to mad scribbling).

S5. Latrine

This room is a large latrine used by the cultists. There's little smell since the narrow pits are deep and drop into a natural cistern that is refreshed by an underground stream.

S6. Common Room

This large room is used by the cultists for eating and recreation. The tables are strewn with dirty plates and utensils, decks of cards, and even a homemade folding chessboard with pieces made of bottle corks. A common oil lamp sits on one of the tables, and its wick is turned low. A combined baking oven and fireplace squats in the northwest corner near tables

used for food preparation. Coals burn in it for heat but are gradually dying for lack of tending. The southwest corner is dominated by a collection of small barrels, sacks, and crates. These contain foodstuffs, flour, snowmelt water, cheap wine, firewood, and lamp oil. All were brought here on the backs of the cultists or by Volkanth and his mount, so several still have the carrying ropes and straps attached to them. The food is safe to eat.

S7. Armory

This room once served as the cult's armory, and the current cultists still use some of the space for this purpose. A few nearly empty weapon racks stand near the door (a few javelins and a short sword remain; the cultists are carrying most of their weapons after

SLEEPING IN THE TOMB OF DREAMS

If the PCs engage in an extended rest in the Tomb of Dreams, the sleeping PCs provoke a skill challenge since creatures from the Far Realm attempt to use their dreams as a portal to enter the world. The sleeping PCs all enter the same dream and are conscious of one another. In this shared dream, they face disturbing problems in strange dreamscapes where they must work together to escape. PCs who choose not to sleep can witness their companions' plight, but they cannot wake them. Instead, the wakeful PCs can aid their sleeping companions with Heal or Diplomacy checks. If the PCs fail the skill challenge, monsters from the Far Realm attack, and the PCs must defend themselves without the benefit of having an extended rest. (They do receive the benefits of a short rest.)

Use the following skill challenge example the first time the PCs sleep in the tomb, and use its structure as a guideline for any later extended rest attempts. The PCs must gain6 victories or 3 defeats to end the challenge. The base DC for the checks below is 19. High DCs are 23, and low DCs are 15. A successful result of the skill challenge earns the party 1,050 XP.

THE ANGRY MOB

You're buying goods in the marketplace and hear a disturbance in the crowd. Someone is wailing piteously. When you go to look, you see a man cupping his face with bloody hands, and when he looks up, you see he has no eyes. Even so, he looks to you and screams in terror, "That voice! They're the ones! They're the ones who stole my eyes!" You look around and all the villagers are looking at you angrily and reaching for belted knives or stones from the ground.

The PCs are the targets of an angry mob. The mob is in the wrong, but they're good people being misled by someone. The PCs have to talk fast if they want to avoid shedding innocent blood. With modification, this skill challenge could be used in many occasions where the PCs or people the PCs care about are the targets of an angry mob.

Setup: The PCs have to calm or disperse the crowd before it becomes violent.

Level: 8.

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate.

Bluff (DC 24): The PC attempts to distract the mob or deflect its members' attention toward something else.

Insight (DC 20): The PC understands the reasons why some in the crowd are moved to violence. Success does not count toward the success of the skill challenge, but this knowledge grants a +2 bonus to further Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks during the skill challenge. PCs can gain this bonus only once during the skill challenge, but the bonus does stack with one gained for spotting the rabble rousers in the crowd (see Perception, below).

Diplomacy (DC 24): The PC uses reason to try to calm or disperse the crowd.

Intimidate (DC 24): The PC threatens the crowd to get them to disperse.

Perception (DC 28): The PC spots one of the rabble rousers secretly inciting members of the mob. The PC gains a +2 bonus to further Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks during the skill challenge. PCs can gain this bonus only once during a skill challenge, but the bonus does stack with one gained for successful use of Insight to understand the reasons the mob is angry (see Insight, above).

Arcana or Religion (DC 24): PCs who are awake, and who succeed on this check, realize that the sleeping PCs are in some form of some traumatic vision. They realize that waking the PCs might not be for the best.

Special: PCs who are awake can wake a sleeping PC with a standard action, but doing so counts as a failure for the skill challenge, and that PC also suffers the depleted rest effect of the failed skill challenge. If the last sleeping PC is awakened in this way, the skill challenge automatically fails, and creatures from the Far Realm attack.

Success: The PCs awaken fully rested.

Failure: The PCs gain only the benefit of a short rest despite using the time of an extended rest, and creatures of the Far Realm appear in their midst and attack. Below are some encounter options appropriate to five 8th-level PCs (who might be a bit under the weather).

- 2 foulspawn grues and 1 foulspawn hulk
- 2 grells
- 2 gricks and 1 grick alpha
- 2 gibbering mouthers

the raid on the road). A stool and a crate are being used as a workstation for fletching arrows. A bag of feathers, some arrowheads, and arrow shafts lie near it on the floor, along with a couple half-completed arrows.

The back half of the room is a tangled mess of materials the cultists cleaned out when they moved in: busted bed frames, rotting tapestries, moldy mattress, sodden rugs, and other detritus. A thorough search of the heap reveals no valuables, but the PCs can find dusty bones and skulls that show signs of a violent end (the remains of some of the old cultists who fell to infighting).

S8. Barracks

This large room is strewn with the bedrolls and belongings of the rank-and-file cultists. As in the bedchambers, the PCs can find personal belongings of their foes and money, but the cultists keep nothing of great value or importance here.

If the PCs are interested enough in these items to make an exact accounting of how many foes they are facing versus how many they've already defeated, make sure to bring that up later in the adventure. You can either allow the PCs the cool feeling of crossing foes off the list and of having ended the cult's threat, or you can make it clear they can't account for some of the foe's whereabouts. Maybe the PCs return to the domed chamber and see evidence of some cultists' flight. The adventure pits the PCs against all the cultists, so if you want to make the players worry, replace some of the human lackeys in "The Sleeper's Tomb" with hanged ones, or leave some of them out.

Treasure: 400 gp, left in the footlockers of the numerous cultists who live here.

S9. Guardians of the Descent

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs open the doors to this area.

The short hallway beyond these doors leads to a chamber within which you spy the base of a large statue made of dimly luminescent black stone. Each wall of the hall has a thick chain running through rings set in the stone every 10 feet or so. The chains are slack between the rings and at the midpoint of the slack areas large metal balls replace several chain links. From the ends of the chain near the door, it appears that each of these balls represents a lidless eye. The chains continue around the corners of the wall into the room.

When the PCs can see the statue in the room, read or paraphrase the following text.

A tall statue looms in the center of this hexagonal room. It's made of the same semitransparent black stone as the depictions of the mauls in the lower part of the domed room, and gloomily glowing veins run through its entirety. The statue at first appears to depict a cloaked and hooded figure holding a rusting sickle aloft in each hand, but a second glance reveals that it holds another sickle in a third arm. Between each pairing of arms is the deeply hooded visage, so that the statue effectively has three faces. Peering up into the hood, you see that no true face lies within; it's just a hollow space.

This room is a defense against unbelievers that was built into the Tomb of Dreams by the original cultists. The chains around the sides of the hall and room are guide chains necessary for safe passage through the door to the spiral stairs. The statue in the center of the room is an eidolon that attacks anyone who enters the room and looks at it and then touches the door to the spiral stairs. Its first action is to use two of its sickles to pull on the chains on each wall. This causes the eyeballs on the chains to jerk into the rings on the walls, creating tension on the rings that pulls open the secret doors, releasing the ghouls. It also causes the chains to be pulled farther out of the walls near the door to the spiral stairs, which makes the portcullises fall by each entrance.

The spiral stairs behind the far door circle round four times before emptying out into Area B1.

If a PC touches the door to the spiral stairs, opens a secret door, or attacks the eidolon, begin "Guardians of the Descent."

Perception Check (DC 18): The chain comes out of the walls near the doors on the far side of the chamber. This fact might make the PCs think twice about the chains' function, and it might allow them to prevent the portcullises from dropping (see below).

Perception Check (DC 28): A PC investigating the chains can succeed in locating one of the secret doors hidden behind the ring in the wall. The door opens outward and can be opened by pulling on the ring. If a PC opens the door, the eidolon attacks; turn to Encounter 4.

Intelligence Check (DC 18): The iron chains show signs of age but the top surfaces seem polished. It's as if many people have run their hands along the top of the chains. A PC who understands the hand wear on the banister or letters in the domed room gains a +2 bonus to this check.

Tactical Encounter: "Guardians of the Descent" (page 85).

B1. Basement Hall

The spiral stairs from Area S9 come down to this hall. The hallway splits to the east and west. The east door is made of wood and open, but the door to the west (to B2) is made of stone and bears a life-size bas relief of a tall horned-and-cloaked figure holding a maul in two hands.

The stone door leads not to the Sleeper's tomb but to a treasury of items held for his awakening—a kind of tomb for his belongings. The door is both locked and trapped. The trap does not fire if the door is opened with the appropriate key, but that key has been missing for nearly one hundred years. If the door is opened in a manner other than through use of the key, the trap fires, affecting the 2 squares to the east of the door.

Perception Check (DC 18): A PC with a passive Perception exceeding this DC can hear a male voice alternately moaning and mumbling unintelligibly. If the PCs decide to head toward the noise, make clear to them that they hear the noise coming from the hall to the north when they get to the intersection that leads to the torture chamber.

Stone Door: This door is like all in the complex, but it is locked and trapped. Opening the lock requires a DC 28 Thievery check. See the trap description below for more details.

Frost Jet Door Trap Level 8 Blaster
Trap XP 350

Two wall squares hide nozzles that let loose a blast of magic frost each round once triggered.

Trap: If the door is opened in a manner other than through use of the key or a successful Thievery check to unlock it, the trap fires, affecting the 2 squares to the east of the door.

Perception

- DC 24: The character notices the nozzles.
- DC 24: The character attempting a Thievery check to open the door notices that a trap will be set off if the lock is not picked precisely.

Trigger

When the door to the tomb is opened without using the proper key, or if a PC failed the Thievery check to unlock it, both frost jets attack as an immediate reaction. They then enter the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered it, attacking each round.

Attack

Immediate Reaction or Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Targets: Creatures in blast
Attack: +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized.
Miss: Half damage and slow.

Countermeasures

- After the trap is triggered, an adjacent character can delay one frost jet for 1 round (treat the trap as stunned until the start of its next turn) with a DC 22 Thievery check.
- An adjacent character can disable one frost jet. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 2 failures). DC 24 Thievery. Each attempt is a standard action.
- A character who succeeds with a DC 28 Thievery check to unlock the door also disables the trap.

B2. Tomb Treasury Entrance

Read or paraphrase the following when PCs enter the area.

A jug-shaped room opens before you, and its vaulted ceiling arches away from the doorway to its highest point of 20 feet at the wide end of the room. Directly across from the door stands a dusty statue like those on the hill: an eyeless man with arms and face raised to the sky. Two closed stone doors flank this statue, each like the one that you opened. Wide archways to the north and south open into other rooms. The floor bears an artful pattern of flat circular stones about 2 feet wide, each made of the strange glimmering black stone you've seen before and carved to look like an eyeball looking up, down, or another direction. As you examine the room, you hear a scraping nose that grows in volume as first one and then another of the eye stones slowly turns toward you, each kicking up a puff of dust from the floor as it does so.

The players might expect a trap, and they're right, although not in the way they think. The eyes are the safe places to step in the room; the puffs of dust come from their sudden movement. Through the odd quality of the dreamstone from which they are made, the stones now act as the eyes of the undead hidden in the ceiling.

There is a trap in the floor, but it's the spaces between the eyestones that are perilous. The PCs can walk on the eye stones and avoid setting off the trap, but doing so is difficult because the eyes constantly shift underfoot.

The pattern of the eyestones can be whatever you wish, but make sure it's one that a person could conceivably walk across. The adventure assumes that they are arranged in a grid and have a few inches between them. This puts four stones per 5-foot square.

Acrobatics Check (DC 20): A PC that exits or ends a turn in an eye square must succeed on an Acrobatics check or step on the spaces between the eyes, setting off a noose trap. A PC that fails the Acrobatics check by 5 or more falls prone and activates a noose trap (although the PC avoids the danger; see below).

Noose Trap	Level 2 Elite Warder
Trap	XP 250

A noose drops down from the ceiling.

Trap: If a PC steps on the spaces between the eyes, the noose trap goes off.

Perception

- DC 20: The character notices one of the ceiling hatches that opens when the trap triggers.
- DC 28: The character notices the trigger plates between the swirling eyes.

Trigger

The trap attacks when a creature steps on the spaces between the swirling eyes, either deliberately or by failing a DC 20 Acrobatics check.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee**

Target: A creature on a trigger square when the trap activates.

Attack: +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, and the creature is pulled up into a compartment in the ceiling where the creature takes 5 ongoing damage until freed from the noose.

Countermeasures

- Before the trap is sprung, an adjacent character can delay a trigger plate with a DC 21 Thievery check.
- An adjacent character can disable a trigger plate with a DC 26 Thievery check.
- A character can attack a trigger plate or one of the swirling eyes (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 30). Attacking a trigger plate triggers it, but to no effect if the PC is not in the square. Destroying a trigger plate renders it useless. Destroying a swirling eye presents a safe space to step in the square, which lowers the DC of the Acrobatics check by 5.
- A character can escape a noose by using the escape action (DC 15). Doing so results in a 20-foot fall to the floor (2d10) unless the PC can grab the walls or the opening door in the ceiling (DC 20 Acrobatics).
- A character can attack a ceiling hatch (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 30).

Read or paraphrase the following the first time a PC sets off one of the traps.

Your weight presses down on the stable space between the swirling eyes and you hear a pop from above! A hatch has opened and a rope is dropping down toward your head!

If the noose traps are activated three times, the undead hidden in the ceiling drop down from trapdoors. These undead are hanged ones. Read or paraphrase the following when this occurs.

The opening of that last trapdoor in the ceiling unhinged them all at once. In a cascade of dust and noisy clatter, they all drop open and release dozens of figures, which fall toward the ground. Dust obscures the room, and the room is quiet but for the creaking of ropes and the brushing of boney toes across the floor. The figures that dropped were past victims of the noose traps. Their dry and decayed bodies hang limply down from the old ropes. Some are nearly complete corpses while others are merely heads connected to torsos, the bones of their limbs having clattered to the floor in their cacophonous appearance.

The traps are a red herring. They exist to spook the PCs and give a scary setup for Encounter 5. The idea is that the PCs will set off a few of the traps one way or another so that when the hanged ones make their appearance, the PCs think of them as past victims of the traps. Then, after they put their grisly discovery out of their minds and get down to looting, you can have a PC notice that one of the ropes is not attached to anything in the ceiling, and the hanged body *is still swinging on the end of its rope. . . .* Roll for initiative!

Of course, it might not work out that way, so be ready to improvise something to send chills down your players' spines. In fact, if the PCs somehow avoid triggering the noose traps three times, you should feel free to spring the hanged ones on them anyway.

Tactical Encounter: "Hanged Ones" (page 86).

B3. Chamber of the War Chest

The door to this chamber is not trapped like the door to the treasury, but it is just as hard to open (DC 24 Thievery check). Inside is the war chest the old cultists prepared for the Sleeper's awakening. Although the fleeing cultists did not believe the Sleeper would awaken, none could bring themselves to disturb his items. The current cultists have left it alone so that it might be used by the Sleeper to restart his war.

Treasure: The room contains three large stone chests decorated with images of eyes and tentacles. None are locked or trapped. They contain heaps of coins and a few gems. In total, the chests contain 4,000 sp, 2,400 gp, five 100 gp pearls, a 500 gp black pearl, and a 1,000 gp fire opal.

B4. Chamber of the Sleeper's Raiment

This chamber's door is as difficult to open as the door leading to the war chest (DC 24 Thievery check). It contains clothing intended for the Sleeper. Although dusty and not as supple as they once were, the expensive robes, shirts, pants, and so on in this room are in remarkably good condition. The clothing consists of dark-colored silk and velvet ornamented with eyes, sickles, and the three-sickled eye shape that is the emblem of That Which Waits Beyond the Stars.

The most important element of clothing in the room is on a wooden mannequin. It's a voluminous black-hooded robe with the hood up over the mannequin's head. Projecting from the hood are two horns. The horns are part of a headdress built into the hood. If you wear the hood, it deeply shadows your face as the horns project out from it. The horns look like all the horns in the graven images of the Sleeper. The mannequin also wears an amulet.

What does this mean? Did the Sleeper not have horns? If so, what is the horn for which the PCs are looking? The answers to these questions are revealed in the final encounter in Area B12.

Treasure: Draped on the dummy is a +3 *dreamstone amulet*.

Dreamstone Amulet Level 12+

This amulet consists of a piece of onyxlike stone shot through with dimly glowing veins set in gold and hanging on a gold chain. The stone is carved to look like an eye, and its gold setting is like the lids of that eye. The glowing veins make the inky eye appear bloodshot with light. As you look at it, the golden lids blink, and the eye turns to focus on you.

Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will
Property: While asleep, you don't take the -5 penalty to Perception checks.
Power (Daily): Minor Action. Use this power to remove the blinded condition and gain blindsight until the end of your next turn.

B5. Chamber of the Sleeper's Armor

In the center of a dais in this room stands a wooden mannequin dressed in the magic armor of the Sleeper. Although dusty, the sleek leather armor doesn't show a sign of age.

Treasure: +2 *deathcut armor.*

B6. Chamber of the Sleeper's Maul

This room is dominated by a large dais atop which is a stone weapon stand. Resting in this stand is the Sleeper's weapon: the *Dreamstone Maul*. Read or paraphrase the following when a PC catches a glimpse of it.

This room is gloomily lit by the weapon in its center. On top of a wide stone dais, resting atop an altarlike stone stand, is a huge hammer. This iron-handled maul must be the same one you've seen wielded by the cloaked and horned figure graven in the doors. Its brutal head is made of the glimmering black rock that composes the eyes in the floor of the main chamber. A tarnished bronze plaque beneath the weapon reads, "The Dreamstone Maul—He who wields it bring His dreams into reality."

The *Dreamstone Maul* is safe to take from the stand, but its disturbing qualities might make a PC think twice.

Dreamstone Weapon Level 12+

This hammer has a brutal head made of black stone veined with dimly glowing light. As you heft it you hear susurrus that you find disturbing despite being unable to discern any meaning.

Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Weapon: Hammer
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 radiant damage per plus
Property: Anyone who touches a *dreamstone weapon* hears whispers in Deep Speech that portend the coming of great star entities and the end of the world. When a wielder swings a *dreamstone weapon*, the weapon audibly gives voice to the wielder's thoughts, which typically means murderous ideas when the wielder is engaged in battle, in the same susurrus voice but in speaker's native tongue.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you attack with the weapon. Attack Will instead of the defense the attack normally targets.

Treasure: +3 *dreamstone maul*. See the Dreamstone Weapon sidebar for details.

B7. Hallway Cells

Each of these tiny cells has a locked wooden door with a small barred window. There's nothing inside but some scattered human bones and the rusty remains of manacles attached to the walls.

Locked Wooden Door: DC 25 Thievery check to open. The door has AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 10; 40 hit points.

B8. Torture Chamber

The character in this room, the Seer, is mumbling and moaning to himself unintelligibly, and the PCs have likely heard him before seeing him. See Area B1 for details.

The Seer is blind and so cannot notice the light the players might be using. Also, he is so absorbed with his thoughts that he doesn't hear the PCs unless they shout to him. The Seer doesn't know who they are and reacts to any inquiries first by silence and then by questioning who the PCs are. If the Seer understands that the PCs are not cultists, he begs for their help in unchaining him, but this is just a ruse to draw them into the room. If the PCs don't trust the Seer, they can attempt a DC 25 Insight check to try to ascertain his motives. While the Seer isn't a practiced liar, his condition lends a great deal of credence to his story.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs can see the Seer.

Beyond the cells in the hall lies what appears to be a torture chamber. Seated on a stool in the center of this room, you see bald man with his back to you. He's stripped to the waist, and his back is a bloody mess of lacerations. He has clearly been whipped. The man is just sitting there rocking back and forth and wordlessly babbling. Long chains are attached to the arms he holds limply by his sides. In front of him stands a lectern upon which lies a large open book. Its pages are covered in messy crimson writing that must be blood. The moaning man suddenly shakes his head vigorously as if denying something, and you notice that his eyes have been torn out and his worn face bears cuts around them.

This disturbing individual is the Seer, the cult's connection to the desires of the Sleeper. Volkanth was inspired to seek out the Tomb of Dreams by his grandmother's stories, but he didn't know what to do once he found it. The Seer, a murderer and madman Volkanth inducted into the cult, revealed the first hints of Volkanth's destiny. The Seer put out his own eyes so that he can receive dream messages while awake, and he finds he receives the clearest messages in places of pain and death, particularly the torture chamber.

The Seer remained behind in the torture chamber in the hopes of having another vision that he received before but found too unclear to interpret. He writes descriptions of the visions he sees in the book on the lectern, chaining himself in place just before the violence of the waking dream claims him. For ink he uses his own blood.

The vision the Seer couldn't understand was about the PCs. After conversing with the PCs for a bit (or when the PCs attack), have the Seer say something like, "I know you. You're no friend to Volkanth. You're one of them! One of those the Sleeper told me!" At this he points to the Bloody Book and then starts straining against his chains and screaming, starting the encounter.

Perception (DC 20): The cuts around the Seer's eyes are the triple sickle shape seen around the eye in the floor of the domed chamber.

The Bloody Book: The Bloody Book contains the Seer's prophecies and visions that he constantly credits to the Sleeper in his writing. The book is a large tome that smells sickeningly of blood. The writing in it is often incomprehensible, and many pages are fused together by crusted blood. A PC who investigates it can read various cryptic passages, such as, "The eyes are the enemy. Seeing is blindness. Only the dreaming eye can see the truth," and "The Sleeper needs blood. Blood needs the horn." In addition, a curious PC can find a rough description of himself or herself, although there appears to be no other members of the party described.

In the event that a PC decides to keep and attempt to fully digest the contents of the book, it takes an extended rest to read (PCs who spend their time reading the book do not gain the benefit of the extended

Paranoia Stain

After a battle that includes foulspawn, each nonaberrant participant must make a saving throw. If it fails, the creature acquires *paranoia stain* until it saves. Creatures can attempt a saving throw only once after each extended rest, and no power or other effect can grant an additional saving throw. A *remove affliction* ritual removes the *paranoia stain*.

Victims of *paranoia stain* believe that foulspawn are after them and suffer from hallucinations. They see leering shapes in the shadows and can't shake the feeling of being watched and relentlessly pursued. Foulspawn can track a stained creature unerringly, across any distance or plane.

rest). Parsing the chaotic babble and separating information from the mad ramblings is difficult (DC 22 Intelligence check), but doing so grants the PC a permanent +2 bonus to Knowledge checks relating to the Far Realm and aberrations. However, the PC's dreams are forever haunted by visions of the things read about in the book, causing the PC to be dazed after waking from sleep or recovering from the unconscious condition (save to end). Also, the PC can never be sure that the dreams were only that or that the things seen in the dreams did not look back.

Tactical Encounter: "The Seer Sees the Truth" (page 87).

B9. Torture Chamber Cells

Each of these tiny cells has a locked door of bars. There's nothing inside but scattered human bones and the rusty remains of manacles attached to the walls.

Locked Door of Bars: DC 20 Thievery check to open. The door has AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 10; 60 hit points.

B10. Blade Bridges

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs look into the first of these rooms. If the PCs don't carry a light source that would reveal the depth of the pit, describe it as being deeper than their light can reach.

The hall ends at the edge of an enormous circular pit that is about 50 feet in diameter. A fall from the edge where you stand would be like falling from a three-story building. Dominating the center of the pit is a 15-foot-wide pillar that rises to the level of the hall. Atop it is a kind of turnstile. Extending from three equidistant points around the pillar are huge sicklelike steel blades that scrape the edge of the pit. From the marks you see on the wall, it's clear that the turnstile must somehow turn the blades so that they can be used as bridges to cross the expanse. Currently the blades are turned away from you.

Each of these large circular chambers is an enormous pit with a pillar of stone in the center. Projecting out from each pillar are three titanic sicklelike blades of steel. Atop the pillar of stone is a stone post with iron bars set in it. The post and bars form a kind of turnstile that is used to rotate the blades around the pillar. In this fashion the blades form one-way bridges across the pits. Once you've turned a bridge to cross the circular chambers in one direction, someone can't cross behind you unless you return to the pillar and turn the blade bridge to allow the person to reach the top of the pillar.

The blade bridge chambers are flanked on the east and west by landings on the level of the bridge. Each landing has two of the statues with its arms and eyeless face upraised. These statues flank doors into crypts. The stone doors

bear the now-familiar image of the Sleeper bearing the Dreamstone Maul. Three of the crypts are nearly identical, but the northeast crypt has double doors, and instead of a sarcophagus bearing the image of a warrior lying in state, its enormous lid is carved with the image of a beholder. These crypts are the resting places of some of the Sleeper's trusted allies. None of the doors are locked, but all are trapped.

Each pit is 30 feet deep. The PCs can successfully navigate the pits in any number of ways (climbing down into the pits before climbing back up, jumping to the pillar and then turning the turnstile for the others to cross, grappling the blade or the turnstile to pull it around, and so on). The blade bridges are remarkably stable, and turning them is surprisingly easy.

Of course, the blade bridges are also traps. If any of the crypt doors are opened, there's a dull boom and the floor shakes as something enormous is dropped behind the stone walls and the blades begin to whirl rapidly like fan blades. This event starts Encounter 6. See the encounter for details on the effect of the spinning blades and how long it lasts.

Pits: 30 feet deep; DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Turnstiles: Turning a turnstile requires a standard action to push and a move action to turn round the top of the pillar. Each standard and move action results in as much as a one-third turn rotation.

Tactical Encounter: "On a Razor's Edge" (page 88).

B11. Eyeball Room

If the PCs didn't set off the blade bridge traps or otherwise make a great deal of noise, the creatures in this room are surprised by the appearance of the group (of course, that might not be the best result; see Encounter 7). Otherwise, they stand at the ready. Read or paraphrase the following when a PC opens the door.

Twisted humanoids hunch around the outside this circular domed chamber. Dominating its center is a carving of a vast dreamstone eye that stares up from the floor from within the folds of eyelids. A chain from the ceiling stretches down to put a hook through the eye's iris. This chain connects to others in the ceiling and must run down through the walls to the winch and levers across the room. You catch all this in a glance and then the huge stone eye grates around in its socket to look at you with a jangle of chains, and the creatures hiss and gurgle as though noticing you for the first time.

This chamber is the starting place for the ceremony of awakening the Sleeper. The eye in the floor is plucked from its socket, and the cultists descend below into a tunnel carved through a solid bedrock of dreamstone. Thus, the cultists pluck out an eye and enter the dreaming mind where they can literally and figuratively come close to the Sleeper.

The huge eye is the cap to a chute with an iron ladder that leads below the ground. At the bottom of this chute is a tight tunnel carved out of dreamstone. There's no map for this tunnel, but it wends side to side and up and down through the black and glowing stone for over 200 feet before it reaches a spiral staircase that is directly below the Sleeper's tomb, which is in turn directly below the Chamber of Sacrifice where the PCs entered.

Dreamstone Tunnel: Passing down the silent and twisted tunnel with no end in sight is disconcerting on its own, but the dreamstone walls, ceiling, and floor, with their glowing veins, add a terrifying feel to the journey. The travel through the tunnel gives a sense of dislocation and a dreamy weightlessness. When the PCs arrive at the end, make a +10 attack against Will. Those hit are dazed. Dazed PCs cannot save against the dazed effect while in the tunnel or on the spiral stairs, and they sense that they must move away from the dreamstone walls to shake the effect. Fortunately, PCs at the base of the stairs can see that the dreamstone blends with normal bedrock the higher up the stairs they go.

Spiral Stairs to B12: These spiral stairs are not indicated on the map but they go up to Area B12. They turn widdershins several times before splitting just below Area B12 and leading in two separate stairways up around the Sleeper's coffin. As the PCs ascend, the dreamstone blends with normal stone until Area B12 where the dreamstone disappears. When the PCs reach the base of these stairs, they can clearly hear numerous voices raised in a deep wordless drone.

Tactical Encounter: "Wrecking Eye" (page 90).

B12. The Sleeper's Tomb

The cultists are intent upon their ceremony and thus don't notice the PCs' approach unless the PCs make a great deal of noise ascending the stairs. Read or paraphrase the following when a PC looks up the split stairs.

Ahead the stairs split around a thick wall and ascend into the room from which you can hear the droning chant. From here you can also make out a voice intoning a prayer that is a repeating plea for the Sleeper to awaken. Directly above the split stair, you see a huge face carved in the ceiling of the wider room above. From what you can see of the face, it mimics the visage in the top of the hill. As you look, a trickle

of dark liquid collects along one of the stone eye sockets and drops from it like a tear. When it hits the floor, you note its crimson color, and you smell blood.

Allow the PCs a few moments to collect themselves, but if they delay too long (such as for a short rest), start the blood rain from the face in the ceiling (see Encounter 8), and have it run down the stairs, which means it has its effect on the PCs.

Above them, Volkanth is leading the remaining cultists and the dream-called foulspawn in the ceremony in hopes of awakening the Sleeper. The last step in the ceremony is the release of the blood collected from the sacrifices in the sacrificial chamber. Volkanth pulls a lever in the altar, and the mysteriously preserved blood pours from the dreamstone reservoir hidden somewhere above to fall out the eyes, nose, and mouth of the face in the ceiling. It starts as a trickle at first and then splatters down in a torrent over the open sarcophagus of the Sleeper and the stairs.

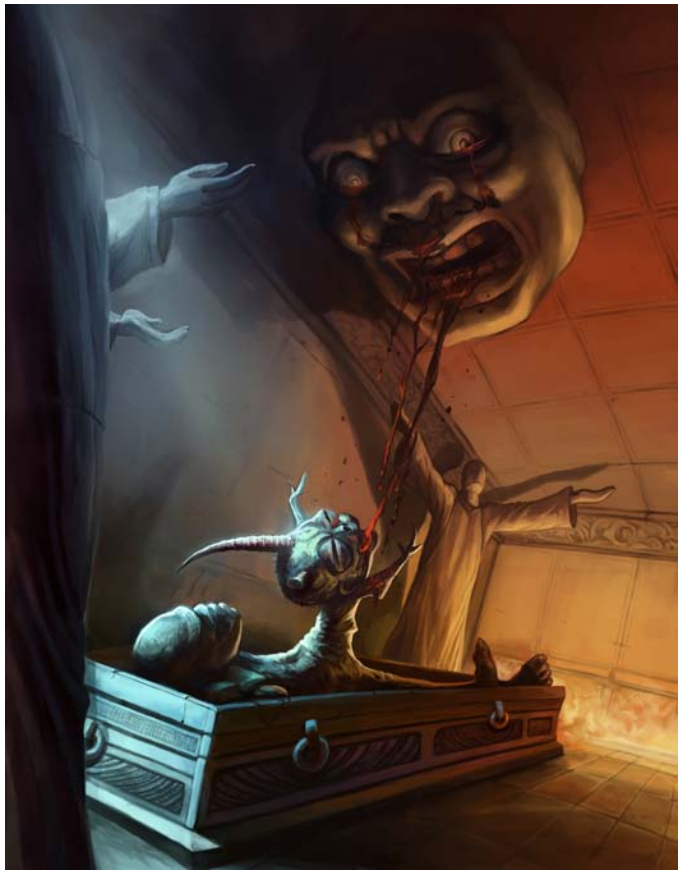
The Sleeper's body is not bones as one would expect but is instead shrunken and brown like a peat-bog mummy. The truth of the Sleeper can be seen within the sarcophagus. The mummified naked body is a male human that lacks horns, but projecting from the corpse's belly is a vestigial twin. This childlike torso has tiny withered arms but a nearly adult-sized head with a horn and a hole in the skull where it is clear that the horn was severed. The twin's sunken eyelids are sown shut, but its mouth is open, and as the blood pours down, its cracked lips and dry tongue move, lapping up the terrible fluid.

Volkanth stands behind the altar holding the horn in one hand while he chants. The bones of Sir Malagant lie upon the altar, and Volkanth has been using the horn to carve depictions of stars and constellations into them. Volkanth wears the armor and sword of Sir Malagant.

Tactical Encounter: "The Sleeper's Tomb" (page 91).

Concluding the Adventure

If the characters defeated the cultists and returned Sir Malagant's bones and the Fiend's Horn to the Raven Queen worshipers, they have staved off a terrible danger to the world. Reward quest XP as appropriate.



Sister Naenia and her followers eagerly await the PCs at the hilltop. There they commit the bones and Fiend's Horn to the care of the Raven Queen in a ritual held that night. At its completion, the bones of Sir Malagant assemble and his ghostly image surrounds them. He then grasps the Fiend's Horn and points it to a dark space in the sky, calling out to the Raven Queen that he is prepared to do his duty. The soul of Sir Malagant then lances into the night sky, moving so swiftly that he turns into a beam of starlight. When the point of his light vanishes like a fading star, there's a boom of thunder like a great door slamming shut. Sister Naenia then invites the PCs back to her monastery to share its meager hospitality.

If the PCs fail to bring back the bones and Fiend's Horn, the Sleeper wakes. This mummy lord seeks revenge on the PCs for their intrusion in his resting place, but not until after he marshals more cultists and foulspawn under his banner. The Sleeper's eventual aim is the release of a Far Realm entity, That Which Waits Beyond the Stars, into the world, but what that means and how it impacts the lives of the PCs is up to you.

Brigands

Encounter Level 9 (1,900 XP)

Setup

Allow PCs who are interested in the attention to the albino girl or otherwise alert for danger to make a Perception checks (opposed by the villains' Stealth check result). PCs who succeed avoid being surprised.

The pilgrims (P) are on the road as shown when the attackers appear. The pilgrims (including Sister Naenia) are intended as set dressing, not as aids in the PCs' fights. Use them for drama and to show that the supposed brigands aren't merely targeting the PCs. If your players would find it more convincing to see you roll attacks and keep track of which live and die, consider each of the pilgrims human rabble (see the *Monster Manual*) and Sister Naenia (S) as a human guard (see the *Monster Manual*). If Sister Naenia is killed, ascribe her dialog to a surviving pilgrim.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

6 human berserkers (B)
2 human mages (M)
2 tiefling shadowblades (D)

Tactics

The berserkers spread out along the front of the train. Two go after the pilgrims on the road, one heads for the lead wagon with the old women (O) aboard, and the remaining three head for the PCs. One skirmisher heads for the PCs and another for the pilgrims. The mages remain in the woods, taking cover behind trees and attacking the PCs. All these individuals fight to the death. Their only goal is to provide a distraction that allows Volkanth to snatch the body from the second wagon and escape.

Volkanth Appears

In the third round of combat, a tiefling male riding a hippogriff wings over the Warwood and swoops down to crash through the second wagon and fly off with the body. The hippogriff flies to the body and uses *mobile melee attack* to snatch the body and fly 5 squares away.

PCs with ranged attacks that can reach Volkanth and his mount have a round to attack before he makes his escape. Volkanth's statistics, as well as those of his mount, are provided, although he's not intended to be fought here. In the unlikely event the PCs kill Volkanth and his mount, the adventure can still continue (although you'll have to modify a number of the encounters). Sister Naenia asks the PCs to investigate where the bandits came from and what they wanted.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, unless the PCs are traveling by night.

Forest: The Warwood is a tangled mess of trees and brush, causing it to be considered difficult terrain. Individuals in the forest have cover.

Wagons: The horses attached to the wagons aren't battle trained, and they are skittish for the whole encounter. If a horse is injured (such as by an area attack), the horses run, heedless of the protests of the wagon's occupants and whatever is in their way.

Pilgrims: Use the pilgrims to add drama to the encounter. Perhaps the first wagon goes wild and the albino girl (A) is standing in its path—only quick action can save her! Maybe Sister Naenia is flanked by two of the berserkers and looks like she can't handle it. That said, don't overplay it; too much of this might cause some players to feel manipulated.

Treasure: None. The tieflings and humans have no valuables on them or even any personal effects. They were a suicide team that never expected to escape the attack on the pilgrims. They carry their weapons and wear some armor and clothes.

2 Human Mages (M)		**Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid		XP 175
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +5	
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21		
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15		
Speed 6		
(+) **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.		
Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**		
Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.		
Dancing Lightning (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**		
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets; ranged 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.		
Thunder Burst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**		
Area burst 1 within 10; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).		
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common	
Skills Arcana +11		
Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 14 (+4)	**Wis** 17 (+5)
Con 12 (+3)	**Int** 18 (+6)	**Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff, wand		

6 Human Berserkers (B)		**Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid		XP 175
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +2	
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *battle fury*		
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14		
Speed 7		
(+) **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
+7 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16 damage).		
Battle Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter)		
The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.		
Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.		
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common	
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +9		
Str 17 (+5)	**Dex** 12 (+3)	**Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+2)	**Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes		

2 Tiefling Shadowblades (D) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Resist fire 11
Speed 6

⨁ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC (+12 against a bloodied target); 1d8 + 4 damage (crit 1d8 + 13 damage).

Combat Advantage
The shadowblade's melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Cloak of Shadows (immediate interrupt, when an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the tiefling shadowblade; at-will)
The triggering enemy is blinded (save ends).

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)
The tiefling shadowblade gains a +1 power bonus to its next attack roll against an enemy that hit it since the tiefling shadowblade's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the tiefling shadowblade deals an extra 2 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +11, **Bluff** +12, **Stealth** +13
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar

Hippogriff **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 4, fly 10, overland flight 15; see also *flyby attack*

⨁ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

Diving Overrun (standard, only while flying; at-will)
The hippogriff charges a Medium or smaller enemy: +9 vs. AC; 2d8 +5 damage, and the target is knocked prone. After attacking, the hippogriff lands in an unoccupied space adjacent to the target.

Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)
The hippogriff flies up to 10 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The hippogriff doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Aerial Agility +1 (while mounted by a friendly rider of 5th level or higher) ✦ **Mount**
While flying, the hippogriff grants its rider a +1 bonus to all defenses.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Volkanth Level 11 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 600

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
Blood Presence aura 2; allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to AC; enemies taking ongoing necrotic damage take a -2 penalty to AC.
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24
Resist fire 10
Speed 5

⨁ **Lifedrinker Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (on crit 12 damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage); if Volkanth reduces a creature to 0 hp, he gains 5 temporary hit points.

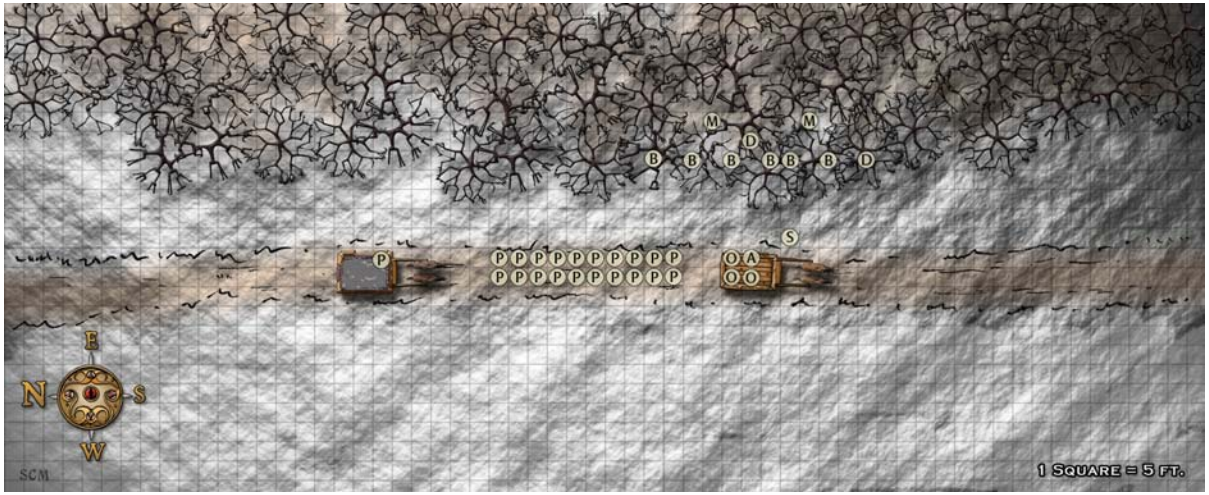
Blood Blades (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5; +15 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 damage; if the creature moves on its turn, the *blood blades* on its body slash it, causing another 2d6 + 4 damage.

Blood Surge (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage plus push 2.

Blood Blindness (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Ranged 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage, and target is blinded (save ends).

Bloodhunt
Volkanth gains a +1 racial bonus to all attack rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Far Speech, Infernal
Skills Bluff +17
Str 15 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 19 (+9) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+10)
Equipment scale armor, *+2 lifedrinker sword*



Warwood Creek

Encounter Level 9 (1,875 XP)

Setup

The cultists are hiding when the PCs approach, but they've grown lazy in their long wait and are concentrating more on keeping warm than keeping watch. The PCs likely spot the cultists before the cultists spot them. Even with the distance, a passive Perception of 13 spots them due to the sleeper (one of the berserkers near the creek) and smoker (one of the tieflings in the woods). They're barely engaged in their watch duty, and thus count as distracted for Perception checks. Resolve who sees whom first and start the encounter.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

5 human berserkers (B)
3 tiefling heretics (H)
1 chillborn zombie

Tactics

The human berserkers take cover behind the rocks and hurl handaxes until they run out of handaxes or until a PC starts crossing the creek. If the PCs stay out of range of their throws and use ranged attacks upon the berserkers, they huddle behind the rocks to gain superior cover (perhaps total cover from a PC directly on the other side of the boulder) or start crossing the ice if that's not possible. The tiefling heretics similarly hide behind cover and use ranged powers. Normally these cultists would fight to the death, but the appearance of too many chillborn zombies changes their minds.

Chillborn Zombies

The chillborn zombies are quiet under the creek until bloodshed awakens them (which is also why none are shown on the tactical map). When a PC or cultist is injured while standing on the frozen creek, a chillborn zombie bursts up through the ice in an adjacent square (leaving a hole in the ice; see Features of the Area). The chillborn zombies attack the nearest PC or cultist until destroyed.

If there are ever more chillborn zombies than cultitsts, the cultists flee for the face in the hill, running as fast as they can. The distance to the hill can be as far as you like but it should be at least a few hundred yards away. Use the rules for the pursuit skill challenge (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) to resolve a chase (assuming the PCs can disentangle themselves from the zombies).

Perception Check
DC 20 Beneath the ice, a pale corpse drifts into sight briefly, then slowly vanishes.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, unless the PCs are traveling by night or weather-based conditions darken the area.

Forest: The Warwood is a tangled mess of trees and brush, causing it to be considered difficult terrain. Individuals in the forest have cover.

Bodies Under the Ice: PCs crossing the frozen creek have an opportunity to notice the bodies frozen beneath it before any chillborn zombies attack.

Ice: The frozen creek is difficult terrain. Each square of ice has 15 hit points and it takes damage both from direct attacks and area effects. Cracks in the ice, and PCs or NPCs using its fragility to cause people to fall through (perhaps unwittingly—keep an eye on that wizard!), are great opportunities to add drama to the encounter.

Holes in the Ice: Any creature that falls into the freezing creek water takes 1d6 ongoing cold damage. The creek is about 4 feet deep so swimming shouldn't be required of most PCs, but if you want to make things more dramatic (and more difficult), feel free to make the water deeper or to make getting out of the frozen creek more difficult (a standard action rather than allowing it to be part of a move action).

The squares of frozen creek around a hole in the ice are more treacherous. A creature that starts a turn adjacent to a hole in the ice must succeed on a DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall prone. A failure by 5 or more causes the creature to fall in the water.

Boulders: These boulders are about 4 feet tall and provide cover.

Treasure: None. However, the tieflings and humans have some cheap jewelry and personal effects.

3 Tiefling Heretics (H) **Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Resist fire 11
Speed 6

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC (+11 against a bloodied target); 1d4 + 2 damage.

Balefire (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d8 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Serpent Curse (standard; encounter) ✦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Ranged 10; illusory snakes appear and attack the target; +9 vs. Will (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).

Cloak of Escape (immediate reaction, when the tiefling heretic is hit by a melee attack; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The tiefling heretic can teleport up to 5 squares.

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)
The tiefling heretic gains a +1 power bonus to its next attack roll against an enemy that hit it since the tiefling heretic's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the tiefling heretic deals an extra 5 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +11, Stealth +15
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 20 (+8)
Equipment dagger

Chillborn Zombie **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural animate (cold, undead) XP 250

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
Chillborn Aura (**Cold**) aura 2; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 5 cold damage. Multiple chillborn auras deal cumulative damage.
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 fire, 5 radiant
Speed 4

Slam (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the chillborn zombie's next turn, and takes ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends); see also *ice reaper*.

Death Burst (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Cold**
The chillborn zombie explodes. Close burst 1; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Ice Reaper ✦ **Cold**
The chillborn zombie deals an extra 5 cold damage to an immobilized creature.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

5 Human Berserkers (B) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

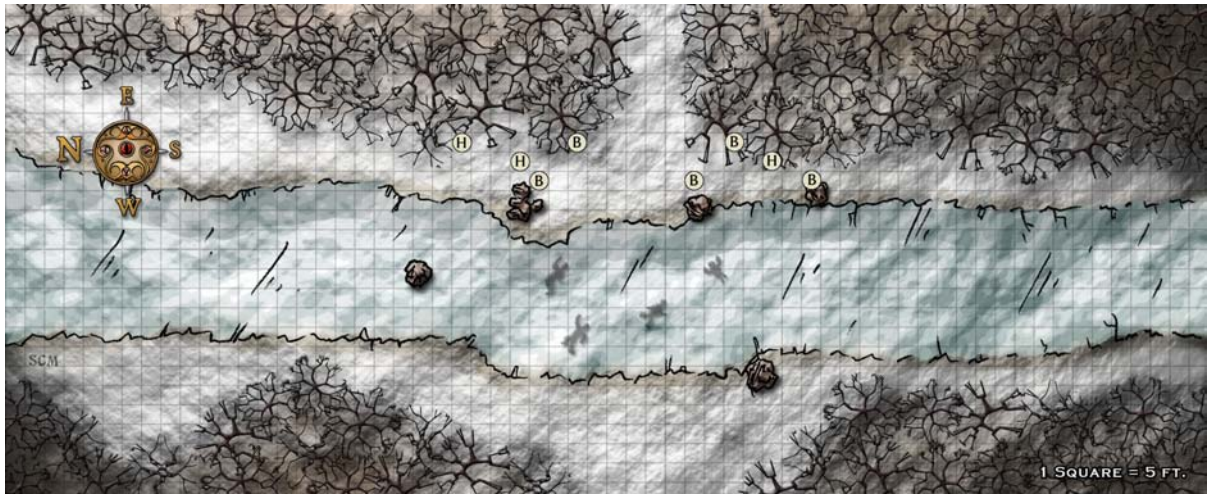
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *battle fury*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14
Speed 7

Greataxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16 damage).

Battle Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.

Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +9
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes



Battle on Stargazer Hill

Encounter Level 9 (2,080 XP)

Setup

The tieflings here are on alert since the return of Volkanth. They're hiding and keeping a sharp eye out for the PCs. The human lackeys remain below inside the Tomb of Dreams, awaiting a call of alarm. The hippogriff is also below. It is trained to respond to the alarm call. The hippogriff and lackeys are not shown on the tactical map, since they join the combat later (see Tactics).

Resolve which group spots which per the normal rules for Perception and Stealth (remember the -2 penalty to Perception for distances greater than 10 squares). If the tieflings have the upper hand, they wait for the PCs to come within 10 squares before shouting the alarm and attacking.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

10 human lackeys
2 tiefling shadowblades (D)
3 tiefling heretics (H)
1 hippogriff

Tactics

The tiefling heretics shout the alarm and attack from range, using cover and distance to avoid as many attacks as possible. The tiefling shadowblades remain hidden as long as possible, hoping the PCs move between them or past them toward the heretics so they can flank and surprise PCs.

On the second round of combat, Volkanth's mount, the hippogriff, flies up out of the mouth to attack the nearest PC. It fights until bloodied but then flees unless a tiefling or human cultist is near enough to mount it and command it to fight.

The human lackeys start the combat on the balcony in Area S1. In the first round of combat, four of them attach grappling hooks to the mouth (they have a lot of practice and automatically succeed), and then start climbing. Four more follow close on their heels. All eight emerge on the third round, moving 2 to 4 squares and taking a standard action.

The remaining two human lackeys wait on the balcony. If a PC moves adjacent to the mouth, the two human lackeys below attempt to hook them with grapples and pull the PC through the mouth to fall on the spikes below (standard; at will; move to "reload"; +8 vs. Reflex; hit pulls PC into fall through the mouth).

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, unless the PCs are traveling by night or weather-based conditions darken the area.

Forest: The Warwood is a tangled mess of trees and brush, causing it to be considered difficult terrain. Individuals in the forest have cover.

The Stargazer: The face in the hill is difficult terrain. Each eye is a hollow and someone in the hollow has cover.

Mouth: The mouth is an opening into Area F1. A fall from the mouth is a fall of 70 feet onto iron spikes (8d10 damage). This is a deadly distance for any of the characters to fall. Remember the rules for the Oath to the Queen should a PC make the plunge.

A creature falling down through the mouth can make a single DC 20 Acrobatics check to halt the fall at the midpoint by grabbing a rope used by the human lackeys to climb up. The creature must have a free hand to do this.

Trees: The trees trunks provide cover and can be climbed (DC 15 Athletics).

Statues: These large statues provide cover.

Bushes: The bushes on the map provide concealment.

3 Tiefling Heretics (H)	**Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18	
Resist fire 11	
Speed 6	
Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+10 vs. AC (+11 against a bloodied target); 1d4 + 2 damage.	
Balefire (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**	
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d8 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Serpent Curse (standard; encounter) ✦ **Illusion, Psychic**	
Ranged 10; illusory snakes appear and attack the target; +9 vs. Will (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Cloak of Escape (immediate reaction, when the tiefling heretic is hit by a melee attack; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The tiefling heretic can teleport up to 5 squares.	
Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)	
The tiefling heretic gains a +1 power bonus to its next attack roll against an enemy that hit it since the tiefling heretic's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the tiefling heretic deals an extra 5 damage.	
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +11, Stealth +15	
Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 20 (+8)
Equipment dagger	

10 Human Lackeys **Level 6 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 63

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *mob rule*
Speed 6

⨺ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 6 damage.

Mob Rule
A human lackey gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human lackeys are within 5 squares of it.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, club

Hippogriff **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 4, fly 10, overland flight 15; see also flyby attack

⨺ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

↓ **Diving Overrun** (standard, only while flying; at-will)
The hippogriff charges a Medium or smaller enemy: +9 vs. AC; 2d8 +5 damage, and the target is knocked prone. After attacking, the hippogriff lands in an unoccupied space adjacent to the target.

↓ **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The hippogriff flies up to 10 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The hippogriff doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Aerial Agility +1 (while mounted by a friendly rider of 5th level or higher) ✦ **Mount**
While flying, the hippogriff grants its rider a +1 bonus to all defenses.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)

2 Tiefling Shadowblades (D) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Resist fire 11
Speed 6

⨺ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC (+12 against a bloodied target); 1d8 + 4 damage (crit 1d8 + 13 damage).

Combat Advantage
The shadowblade's melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Cloak of Shadows (immediate interrupt, when an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the tiefling shadowblade; at-will)
The triggering enemy is blinded (save ends).

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)
The tiefling shadowblade gains a +1 power bonus to its next attack roll against an enemy that hit it since the tiefling shadowblade's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the tiefling shadowblade deals an extra 2 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +11, **Bluff** +12, **Stealth** +13
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar

Guardians of the Descent

Encounter Level 8 (1,800 XP)

Setup

This encounter might begin in a number of ways depending on how the PCs investigate area S9. If the PCs are suspicious of the statue, they aren't surprised.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

6 ghouls (G)

1 reaper wraith eidolon (E)

Tactics

The eidolon uses a standard action to reach out with two sickles and pull the chains running along the walls, causing the portcullises to fall at the points marked on the map, and it opens all the secret doors. The reaper wraith eidolon then becomes insubstantial and uses its phasing ability to vanish into a wall. On the following round the eidolon returns to make attacks.

The freed ghouls attack the PCs until they are destroyed, focusing on any PCs immobilized by the portcullis traps or attempting to leave.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light.

Falling Iron Portcullis Level 7 Obstacle
Trap XP 300

When a chain is pulled, a hidden iron portcullis crashes down, maybe pinning those near it.

Hazard: The chains around the sides of the hall and room are guide chains necessary for safe passage through the door to the spiral stairs. When an eidolon uses two of its sickles to pull on the chains on each wall, the secret doors open and the portcullises fall.

Perception

✦ DC 24: The ceiling by each door has a 2-inch-wide slot packed with dirt and small stones. It's clearly meant to camouflage something.

Additional Skill: Dungeoneering or Thievery (upon a successful Perception check)

✦ DC 28: The dirt and small stones are hiding the holes for a portcullis trap.

Trigger

A portcullis falls if one of the chains on the wall is pulled.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Close** burst 1

Target: Creatures in affected squares

Attack: +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage and restrained (the trap has a Reflex 18 and Fortitude 20 for this attack).

Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

✦ Before it falls, an adjacent character can disable one portcullis. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 2 failures). DC 24 Thievery.

✦ A freed character can force open a portcullis with a successful DC 22 Strength check, freeing a restrained companion.

✦ A character can attack a portcullis bar (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 60). Destroying a bar frees a companion.

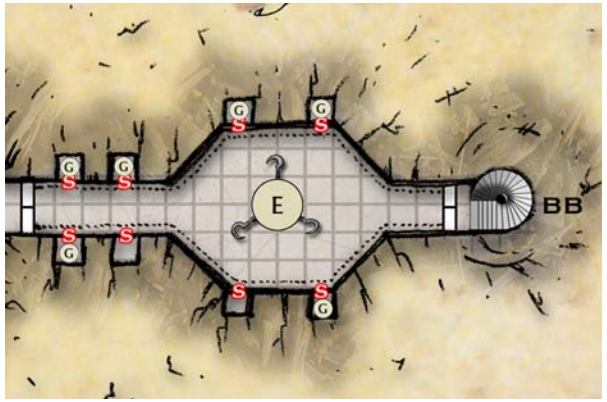
6 Ghouls (G) Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 200

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +2; darkvision
HP 63; **Bloodied** 31
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 8, climb 4

(+) Claws (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

† **Ghoulish Bite** (standard; at-will)
Target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious; +10 vs. AC; 3d6 + 4 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +11
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)



Reaper Wraith Eidolon (E) Level 10 Skirmisher (Leader)
Large natural animate (construct) XP 500

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +7
Fearless Followers aura 5; allies in the aura are immune to fear.
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40
AC 24; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20
Immune disease, fear, sleep; **Resist** 10 necrotic; insubstantial
Speed 5, fly 5 (hover, altitude limit 1); phasing

(+) **Shadow Sickle** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

⟡ **Sickle Burst** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 2; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage. The reaper wraith loses phasing, insubstantial, and the ability to fly until it recharges this ability.

⟡ **Harvest of Fear** (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves out of this creature's reach) ✦ **Fear, Necrotic**
Close burst 3; target the creature moving out of the reaper wraith eidolon's reach; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 necrotic damage and target takes –2 penalty to attacks against the reaper wrath eidolon and its allies within its *fearless follower* aura (save ends).

Unhallowed Stance (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
The eidolon assumes a meditative stance. Until the end of its next turn, the eidolon gains resist 15 to all damage, and all allies in its line of sight deal an extra 1d8 necrotic damage on their melee attacks. If the eidolon moves, the effect ends.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 8 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+5)

The Hanged Ones

Encounter Level 7 (1,575 XP)

Setup

The encounter begins whenever the released hanged ones attack or when the PCs attack them. If you started the encounter by describing a PC noticing a hanged one's movement, that PC shouldn't be surprised when the creatures attack. Place the hanged ones throughout the room in a roughly even spread, avoiding the squares where a PC set off a noose trap and the squares that PCs occupy. The hanged ones are not shown on the tactical map since they are scattered about the room, and simply float to the attack after the PCs have a chance to act.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

25 hanged ones

Tactics

The hanged ones attempt to surround the PCs, spreading out and using their flight to do the most damage to the most enemies.

Features of the Area

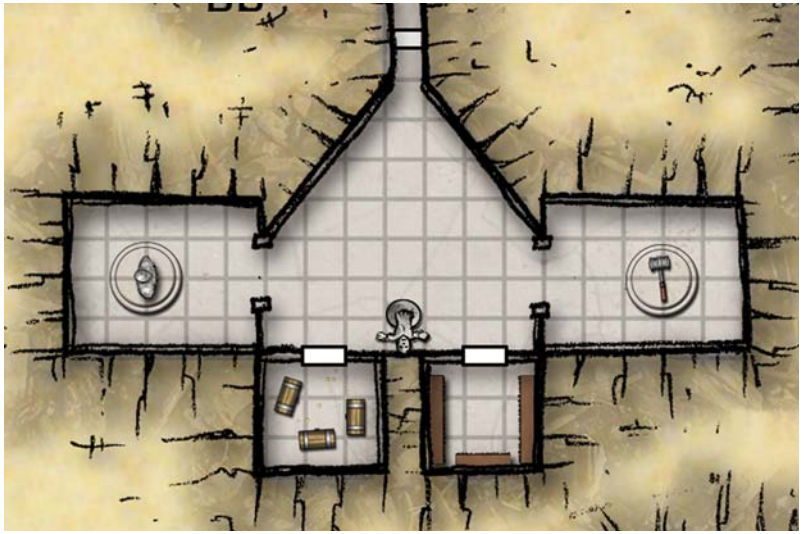
Illumination: Dim light.

Swirling Eyes: A PC that exits or ends a turn in an eye square must succeed on a DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Statue: This statue provides cover.

Door Trap: If the trap to enter this area is still firing, refer back to Area B2 for details.

New Monster: Hanged Ones



Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of hanged ones is that the rotting body attached to the rope doesn't move. It swings about at the end of the rope; the head doesn't even appear to be looking about. The rope is another matter. A few feet up from the head it switches from being a taut, creaking rope to being writhing and snakelike. This rope snaps like a whip, stabs like a spear, and entangles like a constrictor. Despite this strange setup, their bodies are vulnerable to damage, and the PCs don't have to target the ropes.

25 Hanged Ones	**Level 6 Minion**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 63
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +2; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed fly 5 (hover)	
⨁ **Rope Thrust** (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 3 damage.	
Entrap	
If a creature starts its turn adjacent to at least 3 hanged ones, it is immobilized until the end of its turn and takes 5 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 16 (+6)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 1 (-2) **Cha** 3 (-1)

Hanged One Tactics

Hanged ones are always encountered in groups. They attempt to stay in groups of four or more when they attack, focusing on immobilizing a single foe and finishing it off before moving on to another target.

Hanged One Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Relgion check.

DC 15: Hanged ones can be created with dark rituals, but they often arise spontanesouly in areas of concentrated evil when the bodies of slain innocents have been hanged or strangled. They attack in packs, and have the ability to immobilize their opponents with the ropes around their necks.

Seer Sees the Truth

Encounter Level 9+ (base 2,025 XP + 63 XP for each skeleton summoned)

Setup

When the Seer screams, two foulspawn berserkers appear before the Seer, seeming to explode from his empty eye sockets. If the Seer is still alive the following round, three foulspawn manglers appear behind him, seeming to leap from his back. Each round that the Seer remains alive, a locked door to one of the four cells bursts open and a skeleton minion emerges.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

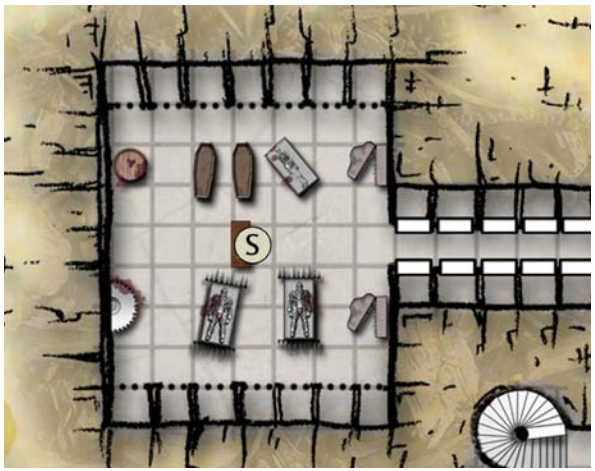
2 foulspawn berserkers
3 foulspawn manglers
A variable number of tortured skeletons
The Seer (S)

Tactics

The Seer does nothing but scream and thrash madly. He is immobilized while chained to the floor. If freed for some reason, he blindly attacks the PCs. The foulspawn attempt to keep the PCs away from the Seer.

The Seer (S) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (human) XP 175
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; blind
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14
Speed 6
⨁ **Chain** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.
Summoning Scream
The Seer summons allies as described under Setup.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +10
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)

3 Foulspawn Manglers **Level 8 Skirmisher**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 350
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43; see also *dagger dance*
AC 22 (24 while bloodied); **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20 (22 while bloodied), **Will** 19; see also *mangler's mobility*
Speed 7 (9 while bloodied)
⨁ **Bone Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.
Dagger Dance (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
The foulspawn mangler makes four *bone dagger* attacks and shifts 1 square after each attack.
Bone Daggers (standard; at-will ✦ **Weapon**
The foulspawn mangler makes two *bone dagger* attacks. Ranged 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage with each hit.
Combat Advantage
The foulspawn mangler deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.
Mangler's Mobility
The foulspawn mangler gains a +5 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by movement.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Skills Athletics +10, Stealth +12
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 6 (+2)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment 8 daggers



Tortured Skeleton Level 6 Minion
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 63
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6
⨁ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 4 damage.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 3 (-1) **Cha** 3 (-1)

2 Foulspawn Berserkers **Level 9 Soldier**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 400
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
Berserker Aura aura 1; when a creature in the aura makes a melee attack, it targets a random creature within its reach.
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51
AC 25; **Fortitude** 26 (28 while bloodied), **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21
Immune fear
Speed 7
⨁ **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC (+16 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied.
Berserker Charge (standard; at-will)
The foulspawn berserker charges and deals an extra 5 damage when its melee basic attack hits.
Mental Feedback ✦ **Psychic**
If the foulspawn berserker is attacked by a charm effect, the foulspawn berserker and its attacker take 10 psychic damage.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 3 (+0)
Con 22 (+10) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Equipment greatsword

Features of the Area

Illumination: Darkness.

Torture Devices: The implements of torture in the room provide cover. If a player thinks of a clever way to use one (such as pushing a foulspawn into an iron maiden), feel free to let them have fun with the room!

On a Razor's Edge

Encounter Level 9 (2,110 XP)

Setup

Read or paraphrase the following if the blade bridge trap is set off.

As you open the door, something in the wall behind the hinge clicks loudly and the door to the other crypt across the way bangs open. Then there's a tremendous clatter of distant chains and a thudding boom from somewhere below that shakes dust from the ceiling. Behind you, the blades begin to turn of their own accord, and within the crypt before you, the sarcophagus explodes open as a something rises into the open air!

Resolve initiative for the PCs and the monsters without surprise for either. The beholder emerges from the room with the double doors. The lost wraiths emerge from the other tombs.

The zombie beholder lacks eyes. As a reanimated former cultist of That Which Waits Beyond the Stars, all its eyes have been removed. If the PCs succeed at a DC 15 Heal check when examining the beholder, they can note triple-sickle scars around the beholder's eye sockets that reveal it had its eyes removed when it was still alive.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

1 beholder zombie (Z)

3 lost wraiths (W)

Tactics

The zombie beholder and lost wraiths attack until destroyed. The lost wraiths prefer to teleport PCs over the blades using relocate. PCs in the pit already are instead the targets of *lost touch* attacks. If a PC falls in a pit, a lost wraith goes down there to attack the PC, ignoring the combat above. The beholder zombie attacks the closest enemy. It's not smart enough to avoid the blades, so if the closest PC is in the pit, it takes a hit from the blades to descend and attack the character.

Beholder Zombie (Z) Level 8 Elite Brute
Large natural animate (undead) XP 700

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; blindsight
HP 88; **Bloodied** 44; see also *rise again*
AC 23; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 23
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed fly 4 (hover)
Action Point 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

⸸ **Zombie Smash** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Target must be Medium size or smaller; +12 vs. AC; 4d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Rise Again (move; the first time the zombie hulk drops to 0 hit points; encounter)
Make a new initiative check for the beholder zombie. On its next turn, the beholder zombie rises (as a move action) with 44 hit points.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 21 (+9) **Dex** 6 (+2) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 3 (+0)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Darkness.

Pits: A fall into the pit provokes an attack from the blades, and the fall itself causes 3d10 damage. If the blades are spinning, they provide cover against attacks made through them. This cover does not allow a creature to hide (it moves too fast).

Pillar: The pillar is 30 feet tall and a DC 20 Athletics check allows a creature to climb it.

3 Lost Wraiths (W) Level 8 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 350

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Immune disease, poison **Resist** 10 necrotic; insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed Fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Lost Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

⸸ **Lost in Shadows** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic, Teleportation**
+11 vs. Will; the target teleports 5 squares to a space of the wraith's choosing, and target is dazed and treats the lost wraith as invisible (save ends both).

Spawn Wraith
Any humanoid killed by a lost wraith rises as a free-willed lost wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +13
Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 11 (+4)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 17 (+7)

Treasure: The three human-sized sarcophagi contain the bones of three of the Sleeper's bodyguards. They are dressed in ornate but mundane plate armor decorated with eyes, and each has a rusting greatsword with a 100 gp moonstone set in its hilt.

Blade Bridges Level 8 Blaster
Trap XP 350

A turnstile of swing blades make it dangerous to pass.

Trap: If a PC opens a crypt door, the trap goes off.

Perception

- DC 24: The character notices that opening a crypt door sets off a kind of trap by releasing something in the wall. The space around the door looks safe, so it must have something to do with the blade bridges.

Trigger

When a PC opens a crypt door, the blades begin to spin and the doors open. The turnstiles attack as an immediate reaction. They then enter the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered the trap. The blades attack any creature that falls in the pit.

Turnstile Attack

Immediate Reaction or Standard Action **Close** blast 1
Targets: Creatures on the pillar
Attack: +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage and push 1.
Miss: Half damage, no push.

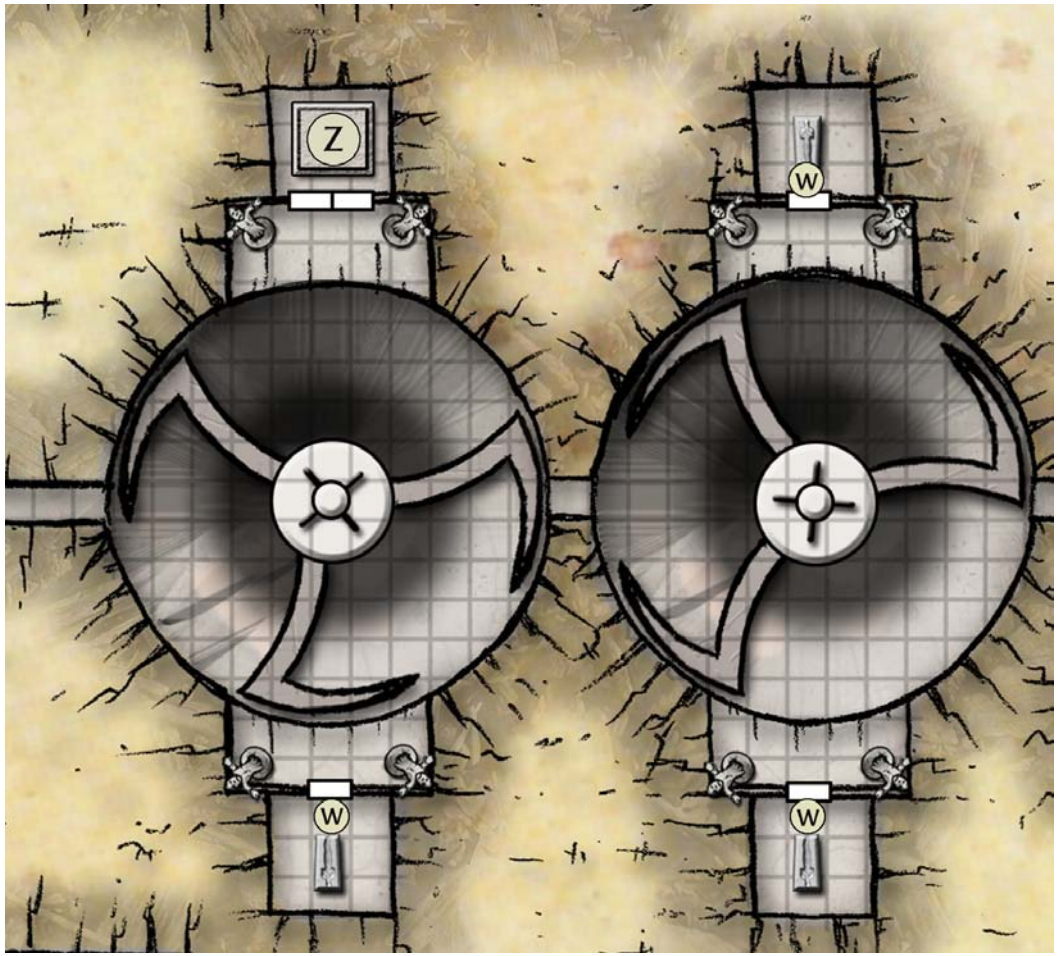
Blades Attack

Opportunity Action **Close** blast 3
Targets: Creatures that fall into the pit
Attack: +12 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 4 damage
Miss: None.

Standing on the Blades: A PC standing on the blades when the trap is active must make a DC 25 Acrobatics check to move. Failure by 5 or more results in a fall into the pit.

Countermeasures

- An adjacent character can disable one door's trigger with a DC 28 Thievery check, allowing the door to be opened without setting off the trap.
- An adjacent character can disable the turnstile and blades on one pillar with a DC 30 Thievery check.
- A character can attack a door (AC 4, Reflex 4, Fortitude 10; hp 60). Destroying a door without opening it gives access to the crypt (and the monster within) without setting off the trap.
- A character can attack a blade (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 50). Destroying the three blades ends their threat in that pit.
- An adjacent character can stop a turnstile with a DC 28 Strength check.
- Wait for 10 rounds. After 10 rounds the blades stop.



Wrecking Eye

Encounter Level 8 (1,800 XP)

Setup

If the PCs didn't set off the blade bridge traps or otherwise make a great deal of noise, the creatures in this room are surprised by the appearance of the group (of course, that might not be the best result; see Encounter 7). Otherwise, they stand at the ready and initiative can be rolled normally.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

5 foulspawn grues (G)

Tactics

The foulspawn grues first use ranged attacks to draw the PCs into the room. Then two attempt to engage the PCs in melee while two attack at ranged and the last one uses the wrecking eye. If the PCs did not set off the blade bridge trap and release the undead, one of the foulspawn grues attempts to slip by the PCs and open one of the crypt doors. The foulspawn grues fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light.

Wrecking Eye: Although it is more of a weapon than a trap, the wrecking eye's rules appear in the format of a trap below.

Laddered Chute: The chute to the center of the floor is 25 feet deep. A creature that falls in takes 2d10 damage from the fall.

Wrecking Eye Level 8 Blaster
Engine XP 350

Creatures can use this huge wrecking-ball machine to attack opponents.

Engine: The wrecking eye is operated with the winch and levers on the wall.

Dungeoneering

✦ DC 18: A PC who succeeds on a Dungeoneering check understands the wrecking eyes mechanism and can use it successfully the first time.

Trigger

The wrecking eye is operated with the winch and levers on the wall. A standard action allows a knowledgeable user (such as the monsters) to use it as a wrecking ball, swinging it at an enemy as a minor action to make one of the two attacks described below. An unknowledgeable user who attempts to manipulate the wrecking eye attacks a random creature in the room the first time it is used but then gets the hang of it and thereafter can attack normally.

Drop Attack
Standard Action
Target: One creature
Attack: Make an attack at the controller's level +5 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 4 damage
Miss: None.

Swing Attack
Standard Action
Target: One creature
Attack: Make an attack at the controllers level +5 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage and push 1 (any direction in the room)
Miss: None.

Countermeasures

✦ An adjacent character can disable the levers (which control swing) or the winch (which controls height) with a DC 28 Thievery check.
✦ A character can attack a chain (AC 17, other defenses 15; hp 20; resist all 5). Destroying the main chain causes the wrecking eye to crash to the floor. It weighs hundreds of pounds, but it can be rolled easily if the PCs need to move it out of the way.
✦ A character can attack the eye (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 80).

5 Foulspawn Grues (G) Level 8 Controller
Small aberrant humanoid XP 350

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Speed 4, teleport 4

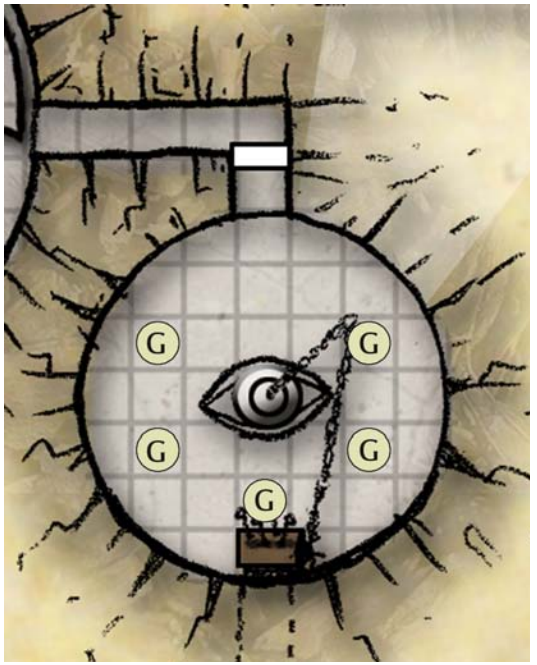
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is dazed instead (save ends).

↛ **Mind Worm** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +10 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to its Will defense and is slowed (save ends both).

↛ **Whispers of Madness** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 5; deafened creatures are immune; +10 vs. Will; 4d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is dazed instead (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Skills Stealth +13

Str 8 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+8)	**Wis** 3 (+0)
Con 15 (+6)	**Int** 11 (+4)	**Cha** 16 (+7)



The Sleeper's Tomb

Encounter Level 14 (4,000 XP)

Setup

If the PCs act fast, they might catch the creatures in this room by surprise since they are distracted (–2 to passive Perception), but if they delay too long and the blood rain is falling, their foes hear them approaching through the blood rain by the change in its sound. The PCs' foes are on the map as shown.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

8 human lackeys (L)
4 foulspawn berserkers (B)
2 foulspawn seers (S)
Volkanth (V)

Tactics

The human lackeys and foulspawn berserkers surround the PCs to attack them, while the foulspawn seers back out of harm's way and make warp orb attacks. Volkanth uses his command of blood to separate the PCs and disrupt their tactics as much as possible. He pushes PCs into the blood rain, preferably on the eastern, deepest part of the stairs.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light.

Stairs: There's a 10-foot drop to the stairs on the east side. A creature pushed into such a square takes 1d10 damage and falls prone. PCs on the part of the stairs not visible on the map cannot see into the room.

The Sleeper: The sleeper isn't intended to be a threat in this combat, but the PCs might attack it, and you might want to increase the difficulty of the encounter. If so, use the statistics of a mummy guardian (see *Monster Manual*, page 192) to represent the Sleeper in his weakened state.

Blood Rain: The blood rain falls from the face in the ceiling over the stairs and the area between them. A creature that is not a member of the cult (the PCs) that enters a blood rain square takes 1d6 necrotic damage and ongoing 5 necrotic. Entering multiple squares on a turn causes the damage for each square but only in the case of ongoing necrotic damage. A creature cannot save against the ongoing necrotic damage while in the area.

Treasure: Volkanth wields Sir Malagant's sword, a *+2 lifedrinker longsword*.

4 Foulspawn Berserkers (B) Level 9 Soldier
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 400

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
Berserker Aura aura 1; when a creature in the aura makes a melee attack, the berserker makes a melee basic attack against a random creature within its reach.
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51
AC 25; **Fortitude** 26 (28 while bloodied), **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21
Immune fear
Speed 7

(+) **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC (+16 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied.

Berserker Charge (standard; at-will)
The foulspawn berserker charges and deals an extra 5 damage when its melee basic attack hits.

Mental Feedback ✦ **Psychic**
If the foulspawn berserker is attacked by a charm effect, the foulspawn berserker and its attacker take 10 psychic damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 3 (+0)
Con 22 (+10) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Equipment greatsword

2 Foulspawn Seers (S) Level 11 Artillery (Leader)
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 600

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
Foul Insight aura 10; allies in the aura that can hear the foulspawn seer gain a +2 power bonus to one attack roll, skill check, ability check, or saving throw on their turn.
AC 24; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43
Speed 6, teleport 3

(+) **Twisted Staff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Warp Orb (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Distortion Blast (standard; daily)
Close blast 5; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). Aberrant creatures take half damage.

Bend Space (immediate interrupt, when the foulspawn seer would be hit by an attack; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
The foulspawn seer teleports 3 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+4)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 22 (+11) **Cha** 18 (+9)

8 Human Lackeys (L) Level 7 Minion
Medium natural humanoid (human) XP 75

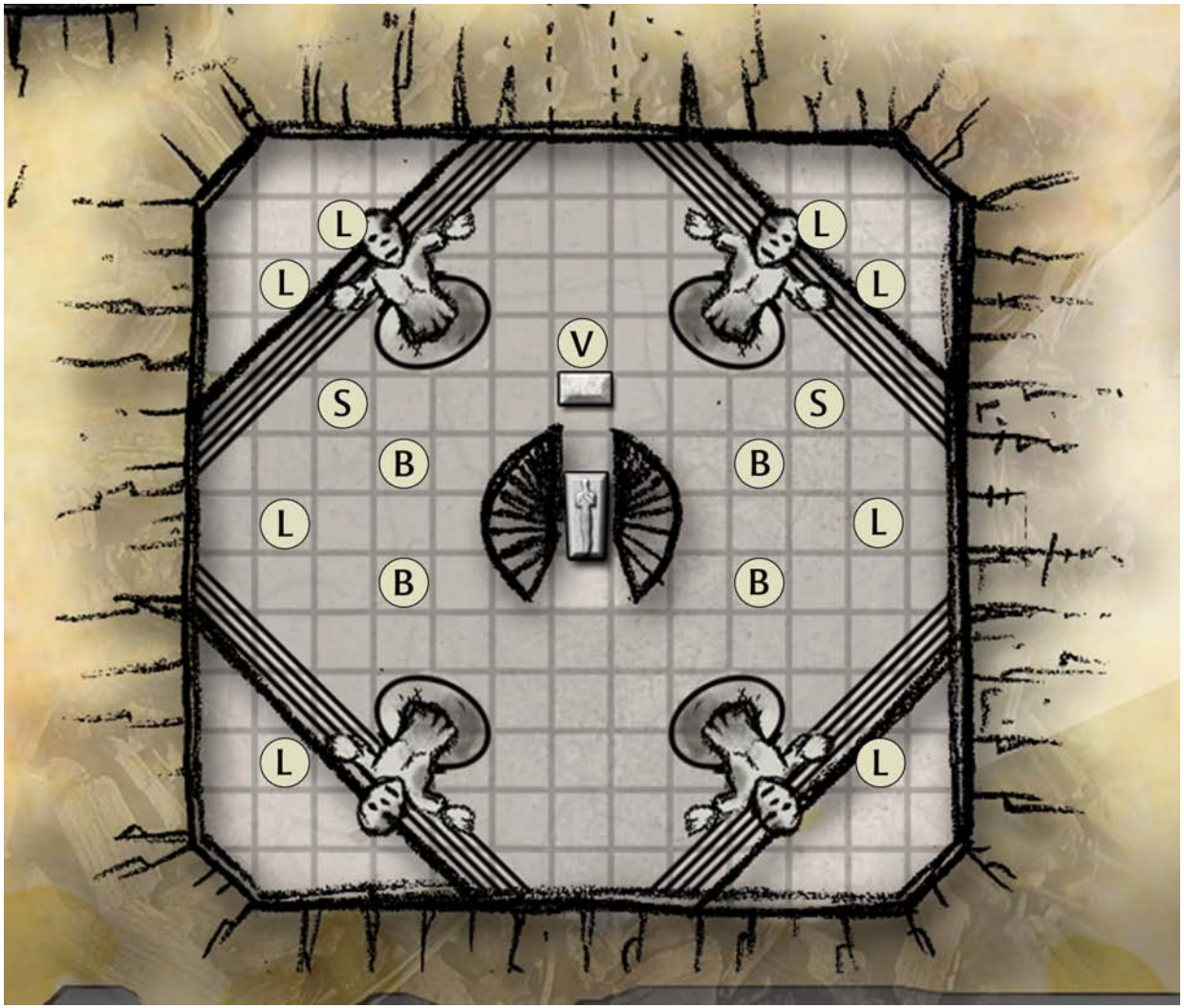
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *mob rule*
Speed 6

(+) **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 6 damage.

Mob Rule
A human lackey gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human lackeys are within 5 squares of it.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, club

Volkanth (V)	Level 11 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (tiefling)	XP 600
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
Blood Presence aura 2; allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to AC; enemies taking ongoing necrotic damage take a -2 penalty to AC.	
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57	
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24	
Resist fire 10	
Speed 5	
Lifedrinker Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** +18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (crit 12 + 2d6 necrotic damage); if Volkanth reduces a creature to 0 hp, he gains 5 temporary hit points.	
Blood Blades (standard; at-will) Ranged 5; +15 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 damage, and if the target moves on its next turn, it takes an extra 2d6 + 4 damage.	
Blood Surge (standard; at-will) Ranged 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.	
Blood Blindness (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) Ranged 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).	
Bloodhunt Volkanth gains a +1 racial bonus to all attack rolls against bloodied enemies.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Far Speech, Infernal
Skills Bluff +17	
Str 15 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 19 (+9)	**Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+10)
Equipment scale armor, +2 *lifedrinker sword*	



About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the Editor-in-chief of Dragon Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for Men's Health Magazine, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry. He feels very fortunate to now be employed as a writer for digital games R&D at Wizards of the Coast.

Shadow of Kalarel

A Keep on the Shadowfell Side Trek

HEROIC 1–10

by Peter Schaefer

illustration by Steve Argyle

cartography by Mike Schley

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THIS SIDE TREK isn't an adventure in the traditional sense. Instead, it is a collection of four encounters tied loosely to the situations and events in *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell*. You can use them for additional fun while running that adventure or to help the PCs maintain the expected level as you proceed through the adventure. If the PCs skip a few encounters, they might fall behind and find later challenges too difficult. Drop one or two of these encounters into *Keep on the Shadowfell* to give the PCs the experience they need to catch up. These encounters can also serve to push the PCs above their expected level, if you'd rather take a little pressure off. Finally, each encounter can also be integrated into other adventures.

Adventure Background

All the background for these encounters is in *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell*.

Adventure Synopsis

This Side Trek consists of four encounters. In the first, Irontooth the goblin has sent out a kobold strike team to harry townsfolk, draw out the heroes, and kill them. The kobolds sell some humans to hobgoblin slavers, a possible connection to the second encounter. In that encounter, hobgoblin slavers trying to make their slave quota attack the PCs en route to Shadowfell Keep.

The third encounter comes directly after the PCs' fight in the graveyard. Kalarel sends additional undead to destroy the PCs if his agent in town fails. The fourth and final encounter involves a group of refugees from the Keep's troubled past, sealed into a secret room and reanimated by the energies pervading the structure. They can be inserted directly after or during Encounter 17 (see page 74 of the *Keep on the Shadowfell* Adventure Book).

Wagon Ambush

Encounter Level 2 (575 XP)

Setup

Before the heroes defeated Irontooth, his scouts reported the danger the PCs represent. He sent out a crack squad of kobold warriors to delay and hopefully destroy the PCs – but he did so too late, and the kobolds missed their chance to ambush the characters before Irontooth was killed. Now the goblin is slain and Winterhaven is better for his absence, but the kobold killers, acting without direct oversight, are still out there and have no idea Irontooth is dead.

Tomas, a wounded man-at-arms, stumbles into town. He is quickly stabilized, but he reports that kobolds are attacking a shipment of food and drink destined for Wrafton's Inn on the road into town. The other guards and the merchants may yet be in dire peril. Lord Padraig quickly asks the PCs to search for survivors and, if necessary, rescue them.

Allow the players to place their miniatures on the road on the north edge of the tactical map.

Run this encounter either directly after the defeat of Irontooth or after their first return from Shadowfell Keep. Expect the PCs to be level 1 before visiting Shadowfell Keep or level 2 if they have returned from the keep.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

1 kobold slyblade (S)
6 kobold minions (M)
1 kobold pikeman (P)
1 kobold hurler (H)

As the PCs enter the area, read:

The worn dirt road curves to the southwest, bounded by an increasingly steep escarpment on the east and southeast. A large copse of birches clusters east of the road, and barrels and bags seem to have tumbled from two wagons that have been overturned. The horses that once drew these wagons are nowhere to be seen.

Perception Check
DC 18 *Sibilant whispers are coming from behind the wagons.*

If the PCs do not succeed on a DC 18 Perception check, the kobolds attack with surprise when the PCs come within 4 squares of a wagon (provided the PCs aren't approaching stealthily, which they can do with DC 14 Stealth checks). Do not place the kobolds on the map until one of the PCs moves to a position with line of sight of the rear of a wagon. Roll initiative when the PCs move close enough to trigger the attack or when the PCs detect the kobolds. The wagons block line of sight and provide cover.

When combat begins, read:

You hear scrabbling and hissing from behind the wagon as kobolds leap from cover to attack!

Kobold Pikeman	**Level 2 Brute**
Small natural humanoid	XP 125
Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13; see also *trap sense*	
Speed 6	
⸸ **Kobold Pike** (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon	
Reach 2; +5 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage.	
⸸ **Warding Strike** (standard; recharge 5 6) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. Fortitude, with a +1 bonus per ally adjacent to the target; 1d10+3 damage and push 1.	
Pikeman Tactics	
If a pikeman readies a melee basic attack against a foe that enters a square adjacent to it, it gains +4 damage on that attack.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Skills Athletics +8, Perception +7, Stealth +9	
Str 15 (+3) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 7 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Equipment hide armor, kobold pike	

6 Kobold Minions	**Level 1 Minion**
Small natural humanoid	XP 25 each
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 11; see also *trap sense*	
Speed 6	
⸸ **Javelin** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 4 damage.	
➶ **Javelin** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +5 vs. AC; 4 damage.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Skills Stealth +4, Thievery +4	
Str 8 (-1) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)	
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+0)	
Equipment hide armor, light shield, 3 javelins	

Kobold Slyblade	**Level 4 Lurker**
Small natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14; see also *trap sense*	
Speed 6	
(+) **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 damage.	
Twin Slash (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires combat advantage; the kobold slyblade makes 2 short sword attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends)	
Combat Advantage	
The kobold slyblade deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against	
Sly Dodge (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack; at-will)	
The kobold slyblade redirects the attack to an adjacent kobold minion.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Skills Acrobatics +11, Stealth +13, Thievery +13	
Str 9 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+3)	
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 9 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+4)	
Equipment leather armor, 2 short swords	

Tactics

The other kobolds delay so the minions attack first. The minions position themselves so the slyblade can flank for combat advantage, and one always stays near the slyblade if possible to allow use of *sly dodge*. The pikeman attacks whichever PC is adjacent to the most minions to take advantage of *warding strike*. The hurler stays as far from the fight as he can without getting into long range, supporting the slyblade and pikeman with gluepots and stinkpots. When he lacks any other alternative or a PC looks vulnerable, he resorts to firepots for the raw damage.

Kobold Hurler	**Level 2 Artillery**
Small natural humanoid	XP 125
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15	
AC 14; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13; see also trap sense	
Speed 6	
(+) **Dagger** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 1d4+3 damage.	
Hurl Pot (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6+3 damage plus *special shot* below.	
Special Shot	
The kobold hurler can throw special ammunition. It typically carries 2 rounds of special shot, chosen from the types listed below. A *special shot* attack that hits deals normal damage and has an additional effect depending on its type:	
Stinkpot: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses (save ends).	
Firepot (Fire): The target takes ongoing 4 fire damage (save ends).	
Gluepot: The target is immobilized (save ends).	
The hurler throws only rocks (for damage as above but with no special effect) when he runs out of pots to throw.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Skills Acrobatics +8, Stealth +10, Thievery +10	
Str 9 (-1) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)	
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+0)	
Equipment leather armor, dagger, 2 rounds of special shot (see above)	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, or if the PCs are traveling by night, dim light. PCs approaching the area with light sources cannot use Stealth.

Trees: The trees in this area are difficult terrain and provide normal cover.

Treasure: If the PCs defeat the kobolds guards, they find the weapons noted in each kobold stat block, as well as a total of 43 gp and 28 sp.

Clues: No sign remains of the half-dozen others, merchants and guards, other than splashes of blood on the dusty path. A campsite behind the trees to the east shows a lot of use. A DC 15 Perception check reveals bootprints much larger than kobold feet and a trail that leads off and rejoins the path to Shadowfell Keep.

Slaver Encounter

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

A group of hobgoblins working for the Bloodreavers are camped a short distance from Shadowfell Keep. They use this outcropping as a place to stay and keep slaves they buy until they are ready to return to the Bloodreavers. This trip, the pickings have been slim, and the slavers have stayed longer than they prefer. They were pleased to buy some captives from kobolds near Winterhaven (which explains the kobolds' riches) but are still not satisfied with their take.

If you choose not to use this encounter, consider making the NPCs in the Wagon Ambush encounter prisoners at the nearby kobold camp or including them in PCs' encounters with the Bloodreavers in *H2: Thunderspire Labyrinth*. If you chose not to use the Wagon Ambush, there are no prisoners here.

Allow the players to place their miniatures on the southwest end of the road on the tactical map.

Run this encounter after the Wagon Ambush, on either the PCs' first or second approach to the Keep.

This encounter includes the following creatures.
1 hobgoblin subcommander (C)
4 hobgoblin grunts (M)
2 hobgoblin soldiers (S)
1 hobgoblin archer (A)

As the PCs enter the area, read:
The overgrown path meanders through the forest, revealing a stone promontory abutting the road.

4 Hobgoblin Grunts **Level 3 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 38 each

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 17 (19 with *phalanx soldier*); **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12
Speed 6

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin grunt suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin grunt makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Phalanx Soldier
The hobgoblin grunt gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, goblin
Skills Athletics +6, History +2
Str 18 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Wis** 13 (+1)
Con 15 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 9 (-1)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, longsword

Perception Check
DC 15 *You hear what sounds like soft weeping through the forest on your right and notice bent branches indicating someone has recently passed that way from here.*
DC 18 *At the same time, you think you're being watched.*

If the PCs do not succeed on the DC 15 Perception check, the hobgoblins attack with surprise when the softest target (generally a wizard or warlock) looks most vulnerable. With success on the DC 15 check but not the DC 18 check, the slavers attack with surprise only after the PCs get a chance to arrange their formation or when one character steps into the woods. With a Perception check of 18 or greater, the PCs detect the hobgoblin soldiers (S) and there is no surprise round. Roll initiative when the hobgoblins attack or when the PCs detect the slavers. The woods provide cover but do not hinder movement.

Hobgoblin Subcommander Level 3 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24
AC 19 (21 with phalanx soldier); **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17
Speed 5

Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage; see also lead from the front.
If the hobgoblin subcommander hits with an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square.

Tactical Deployment (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close burst 5; allies in the burst shift 3 squares.

Lead from the Front
When the hobgoblin subcommander's melee attack hits an enemy, allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until the end of the hobgoblin subcommander's next turn.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin subcommander suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The hobgoblin subcommander rolls a saving throw against the effect.

Phalanx Soldier
The hobgoblin subcommander gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to it.

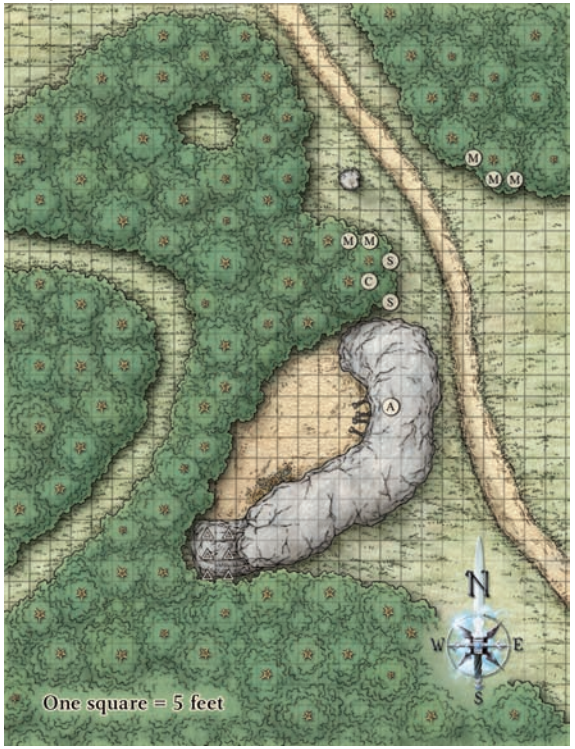
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +10, History +9, Intimidate +6
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, spear

When combat begins, read:
Low grunts in a growling tongue escalate to shouts when your attackers – big, brutish goblins – are sure they've been seen.

2 Hobgoblin Soldiers		Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision	
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23		
AC 20 (22 with *phalanx soldier*); **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16		
Speed 5		
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Flail +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, the target is marked and slowed until the end of the hobgoblin soldier's next turn.		
Formation Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Requires flail; +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the hobgoblin soldier shifts 1 square provided it ends in a space adjacent to another hobgoblin.		
Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin soldier suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)		
The hobgoblin soldier rolls a saving throw against the effect.		
Phalanx Soldier		
The hobgoblin soldier gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to it.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Goblin	
Skills Athletics +10, History +8		
Str 19 (+5)	**Dex** 14 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 15 (+3)	**Int** 11 (+1)	**Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, flail		

Tactics

Each hobgoblin stays beside at least one other during this fight, especially the two soldiers. The soldiers and the subcommander trigger opportunity attacks if able to benefit from *phalanx soldier* against the attack. Once combat begins, the soldiers move into battle with the subcommander while the grunts move to provide flanks. The archer appears atop the great rock, firing down into the fracas. When the subcommander hits a PC, all the other hobgoblins attack that target. Once two or fewer hobgoblins remain standing, they retreat, calling out insults and swearing revenge from the Bloodreavers. If the PCs are defeated, they awake in chains.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, or if the PCs are traveling by night, dim light. PCs approaching the area with light sources cannot use Stealth.

Trees: The trees in this area are difficult terrain and provide normal cover.

Treasure: If the PCs defeat the hobgoblin slavers, they find the weapons noted in each hobgoblin stat block, as well as a *potion of healing*, 33 gp, and 20 sp.

Clues: Examination of the hideout reveals the two merchants and their two surviving guards, chained. There is no indication that any other slavers were stationed here. They are relieved to have an escort back to Winterhaven; otherwise, they are able to return to the town on their own.

Hobgoblin Archer		Level 3 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision	
HP 39; **Bloodied** 19		
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13		
Speed 6		
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Longsword +6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.		
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Longbow Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the hobgoblin archer grants an ally within 5 squares of it a +2 bonus to its next ranged attack roll against the same target.		
Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin archer suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)		
The hobgoblin archer rolls a saving throw against the effect.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Goblin	
Skills Athletics +5, History +6		
Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+5)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 15 (+3)	**Int** 11 (+1)	**Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows		

Graveyard Exterior

Encounter Level 3 (834 XP)

Setup

When Kalarel commanded that the dead of Winterhaven rise and eliminate the PCs, he sent a favored creature of his, an animated corpse he calls Maw.

Maw and its cohorts arrive too late to coordinate their effort with Ninaran. They launch their assault as soon as the PCs leave the graveyard.

You can also use this encounter separately from Interlude Three in *Keep on the Shadowfell*. Maw and its band might come upon the PCs en route to or from the Keep, or ambush the heroes at any time.

Allow the players to place their miniatures outside the gate on the south end of the map. The south end of the map matches to the north end of the Dead Walk tactical map (*Keep on the Shadowfell*, page 61).

This encounter includes the following creatures.

Maw (M)
18 zombie rotters (R)

18 Zombie Rotters		**Level 3 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 38 each
Initiative -2	**Senses** Perception -1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 9, **Will** 10		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 4		
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)		
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.		
Undead Tenacity		
When a zombie rotter within 2 squares of Maw hits a creature, it grabs that creature.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 14 (+2)	**Dex** 6 (-2)	**Wis** 8 (-1)
Con 10 (+0)	**Int** 1 (-5)	**Cha** 3 (-4)

As the PCs leave the graveyard, read:

What could have been the howl of a distant wind distinguishes itself as a dozen moans from the decomposing throats of more undead, which stagger out from behind trees and other cover.

Grave markers provide cover but do not hinder movement.

Tactics

Maw remains in the back, directing the rotters. Two remain near Maw as guards. If the battle moves away from it, Maw moves forward to remain near its troops. Only when pressed does Maw summon fresh rotters from the ground; it fights to the death.

Maw		**Level 3 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 150
Initiative +1	**Senses** Perception +8; darkvision	
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22		
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14		
Resist 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant		
Speed 6		
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. AC; 1d8+2 damage.		
Claw of Kalarel (standard; at-will)		
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Fortitude; a shadowy claw slides the target 3 squares, plus any zombie rotter adjacent to the target after the slide makes a melee basic attack against the target.		
Speed of the Damned (standard; at-will)		
Close burst 10; up to four zombie rotters; targets make a melee basic attack.		
Arise, Corpse (standard; encounter)		
A zombie rotter rises from the ground in each of four squares adjacent to Maw.		
Undead Tenacity		
When a zombie rotter within 2 squares of Maw hits a creature, it grabs that creature.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common	
Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 10 (+1)	**Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 12 (+2)	**Int** 16 (+4)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, or if the PCs are traveling by night, dim light. PCs approaching the area with light sources cannot use Stealth.

Trees: The trees in this area are difficult terrain and provide normal cover.

Grave Markers: Grave markers provide cover but do not hinder movement.

The Shrine: The shrine's walls are AC 5, Fort 10, Reflex 5, and each 1-square section of wall has 10 hp. The altar and piles of sacrifices are difficult terrain.

Treasure: Maw and the zombies carry no treasure. If the PCs defeat Maw, add 70 gp to the treasure gained in a later encounter.

Hidden Victims

Encounter Level 2 (559 XP)

Setup

During the tragedy that saw Shadowfell Keep deserted, several soldiers hid the Keep's noncombatants in a pair of rarely-used rooms. The men then walled themselves and their wards into the chambers for safety. With plenty of food, they thought themselves safe. The soldiers realized too late that they had sealed themselves into a tomb. Their disappearance was marked up to the mad paladin.

Today, the dead innocents stir. The enchantment that roused the ghoul in Encounter 17 of Shadowfell Keep also made monsters of these ancient warriors and servants. The soldiers' former nobility now manifests only as a faint urge to defend these once noncombatant zombies.

Use this encounter immediately after Encounter 17 from *Keep on the Shadowfell*. Trigger this encounter when the PCs explore the room through the tunnel after defeating the ghoul and lesser undead.

The tactical map for this encounter connects with the map of Shadowfell Keep's second level (*Keep on the Shadowfell*, page 63).

This encounter includes the following creatures.

3 zombie soldiers (S)
8 zombie rotters (R)

When you activate the encounter, read:

The low moaning that has been in the background for several minutes swells, which immediately precedes the collapse of a nearby wall. Corpses wearing armor and carrying rusted swords lumber through the wall, standing between you and the unarmored zombies behind them.

Roll initiative at this time. If the PCs have already rolled initiative for combat with Encounter 17, roll for the zombies and add them to the initiative cycle.

3 Zombie Soldiers		**Level 2 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 125 each
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +2; darkvision	
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19		
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13		
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant		
Speed 6		
(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. AC; 1d8+3 damage.		
ǂ **Protective Strike** (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent foe attacks a zombie rotter; at-will)		
+9 vs. AC; 1d8+3 damage and target suffers -4 to the triggering attack.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 12 (+2)	**Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 10 (+1)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

8 Zombie Rotters		**Level 3 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 38 each
Initiative -2	**Senses** Perception -1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 9, **Will** 10		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 4		
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)		
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.		
Undead Tenacity		
When a zombie rotter within 2 squares of Maw hits a creature, it grabs that creature.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 14 (+2)	**Dex** 6 (-2)	**Wis** 8 (-1)
Con 10 (+0)	**Int** 1 (-5)	**Cha** 3 (-4)

Tactics

The zombie rotters fight without direction, lunging for the nearest living creature they can reach. Zombie soldiers also attack, but move to defend rotters under attack in preference to pressing their assault on other creatures. Neither the soldiers nor the rotters have allegiance to Kalarel.

Features of the Area

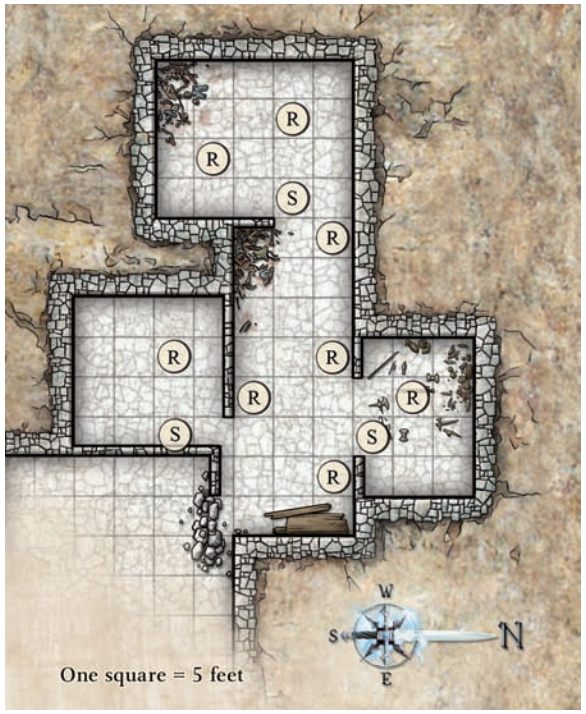
Illumination: Darkness.

Tunnel: See *Keep on the Shadowfell*, page 75.

Treasure: Scattered in the sealed-off chambers are a few valuable possessions, including 23 gp, 23 sp, a golden locket (worth 50 gp) with a faded picture and the name "Vera" inside, a silver ring (worth 30 gp), and a jade belt buckle (worth 45 gp).

About the Author

Peter Schaefer is a game developer and master of the arcane arts. He spends his days developing for Dungeons & Dragons and his nights studying ancient lore alongside Mordenkainen and Dr. Strange.



Roleplaying, Hook, Line, and Sinker

by Stephen Radney-Macfarland

Last time we chatted, I'd received an e-mail from Dustin who'd caught the roleplaying bug in a big way. Though he had already been playing D&D for awhile, he found a DM with a very immersive roleplaying style, became hooked, and wanted to bring that style back to his regular, hack-and-slash group of gamers. But Dustin was having problems. He just couldn't get his group to stop hacking, looting, and metagaming. When confronted with this newer style, they blinked, dumbfounded.

The very nature of roleplaying is more free-form than the game rules. Free-form makes some people nervous and self-conscious, especially if they're not a ham or an actor. Sometimes you have to ease players into roleplaying; make it work like other things in the game.

Here's some ideas as to how:

Create Hooks

There are a lot of D&D games out there that involve the bare-bones, smash-and-grab model of roleplaying—it's about stats; it's about action; it's about ass-kicking; it's about treasure. Players in these games don't need as much story to guide them in. They don't give a damn about the implausible. They're having fun, because they've bought into the game. Why? Because the game and its design have built-in hooks.

What do I mean by hooks? The parts that grab your audience, pull them in, and never let them go. D&D has these in spades. Classes and races are both hooks; their concepts, art, and application reach out and grab people. The "simple rules with many exceptions" principle of D&D is another. You always have a firm idea of the generals, and you can reference the specific. That's very much a hook. It pokes its head up and says, "Hey, I'm here, and I think you'll like me." The people who do like it, grab it and run. Heck, just the fact that D&D is a fantasy game is its own hook.

Oftentimes DMs forget the general principle of hooks when they make their campaigns. Some make the critical mistake of making a place they believe "could be real", not realizing that few players are interested in the models for trade and agriculture of their game world—since much of the game is a power fantasy. Others are so fixated with their campaign's overarching story that they overlook the fact that this form of storytelling already has an audience (and cast) of real people in the form of players and their characters. In the end, these DMs are often trapped creating hooks that interest only themselves. And as the DM, if you're only interesting yourself then you've lost a good chunk of your audience.

It's much better to have a sandbox approach to story and roleplaying. Throw out loose threads, see who bites, figure out why they bite, and react to the story rather than driving it autocratically from the start. You might guide your players in class and race choices, but you wouldn't make those decisions for them. Don't try to make roleplaying decisions for them either. Don't be afraid to be loose in your details of your world and story vision without losing it completely. Pick up on good ideas and suggestions from your players. As your players become more attached to the story, the immersion level will rise, especially when they figure out that they are the ones driving it rather than simply riding it. When they have more investment in the storytelling and roleplaying parts of the game, they'll focus on these parts rather than ignore or avoid them.

I'll give you an example by briefly outlining what I'm doing in my current campaign—my first, full-fledged 1 to 30 D&D 4E campaign—a little ditty I've titled the Days of Long Shadows.

When my players made their characters I gave them a list of seven backgrounds they could choose if they so wanted. I told them from the start that choosing a background would ensure their characters had a stronger connection to the overall plot of the campaign, but that they didn't need to take one. I made these backgrounds simple, with few restrictions. Here are a couple of examples:

The Hexed

Half-elf, human, or tiefling

You are cursed by a mysterious master—so mysterious that you don't even know his identity. All you know is that his raspy voice occasionally compels you to do things, sometimes terrible things... but worse things happen when you refuse.

The Orphan

Human

You're an orphan of the disappeared village of Fadail. A wandering oracle of Ioun prophesized that Fadail could only be found by its last scion. Presumably, that person is you.

Basically they are just raw hooks with a purpose. I took some of the interesting themes I wanted to explore in the campaign, composed them in a form that might interest some of my players, and put them out there for my players to pick.

Having my players pick their backgrounds did a couple of things. First of all, it gave them a focused hook into one or more of the stories and themes of the campaign. Having choice alone strengthened their story investment, and gave me a tool that simultaneously focuses their plot-seeking activity and helps me create stories that speak to their characters personally—even before the campaign has started.

For instance, I definitely had a player in mind when I wrote the hexed . . . and was not surprised when the player took that background. He's a little emo (which is fine with me, I love emo!), and likes playing these mysterious, tormented characters that have a secret. I knew he would gravitate toward this background.

As for the backgrounds not chosen (like the Orphan above) . . . well, I have a page of rough ideas I now won't be using this particular campaign, but that's no big deal. I can learn a lot from what my players didn't pick about what kind of game is going to interest them.

More importantly with backgrounds done this way, I bridged the gap between game and story. Since backgrounds became a character choice, it feels like another choice the character owns. I created roleplaying and story hooks the same way the rest of the game hooks worked—I let my players grab what they like!

Keep those Lines Taut

So you have the hooks, next step: don't let them go. Not only that, always keep a lookout for new and interesting hooks. Every time you've identified what a player finds interesting in your game, find a way to pull them in with it. In the case of my campaign, my first order of business is to make sure that the background choice each of the players stays important and relevant. Picking a background will feel like a wasted choice if its themes and ideas never come up in the game, and the hook thus becomes irrelevant and pointless. After all, it's not like my PCs can retrain their background! At the same time, a D&D game has an ensemble cast. Rare is the game session in which every line will get a tug—usually you'll save them for when they'll have the best effect.

For instance, if the hexed character picked that background and never heard the voice... well that would just be silly and counterproductive. But the opposite is true as well. If every game started with the voice telling him what to do, that would be just as bad. The right decision is to save these reveals for the right moments, and until then, leave them hanging over the character's head. After a few sessions go by, and when something interesting is going on, I will bring in the mysterious agenda to create drama, conflict, and give the player some interesting choices to make.

My second order of business is to see how each player interprets those hooks, and uses them to flesh out their character and inform their actions. My backgrounds lack detail for a reason—I want to see how each player interprets and weaves them into the story. As the hexed player comes up with past stories on how the voice guided him, I can make sure that future instances of the voice act in a similar manner.

Don't Be a Sinker

Lastly, don't sink honest effort even if it is awkward. It takes practice to do anything really well. Yes, there is native ability, and each of us has encountered some activity that we have a natural talent for, but those gems are few and far between. Anything else we want to do well involves trial, and usually a lot of error, until we hit our groove.

The same is true for roleplaying. While the drama major in your group might excel, your group introvert will have a hard time with it at first. And while pointing out when someone does something awkward while trying to roleplay might give us that brief moment of snarky joy, if you want to promote roleplaying and deeper story interaction, carrots and a friendly guiding hand is better than the snark stick. Don't worry; none of you are up for an Oscar. No talent agent will come knocking on your door. People will continue roleplaying as long as they are having fun. Being overly critical might be fun for you, but it is rarely fun for others.

Approaching From Other Directions

So, I've talked a lot about how a Dungeon Master can support roleplaying, but the hook, line, and sinker method of promoting roleplaying works for the players on the other side of screen as well. For you, the player, the hooks are your character's relationships with other member of the party. They can be as simple as competing over kills, like Legolas and Gimli did in the Lord of the Rings, or as immersive as making a detailed history with connection points to each of your fellow PCs. The important part is to find ways to compliment your character's story with the other characters in the campaign, in the same way that your character's role complements the other characters' roles. Watch out for the same pitfalls that threaten your DM in the promotion of roleplaying and interactive story. Remember that you are not the only one playing the game. Don't try to make your story or personality dominate, at least not at the expense of others.

Make encounters and decision points that don't have one obvious solution, but that involve multiple routes to degrees of success and failure.

Just like the DM, tug those lines when you can and create new hooks with your friends' characters and the story as it unfolds. Instead of telling your warlord, "Use wolf pack tactics again!" look at the player and say, "Remember how we defeated the dragon, Vesrimax? I think that might be the right move here." In the end you have a share of the responsibility when it comes to building story. After you have the rules down, start seeing and driving the action through the eyes of your character.

The "don't be a sinker" part is exactly the same... just don't do it. I know it's hard to pass up a few laughs at the expense of someone else's foibles. But if I can do it, you can too!

Okay, with that done, let's take a look in the mailbag!

Immediate Reaction

All of my players are strictly reactive. I play with people who have been in games before, they aren't brand new players, but they don't act... they react. In other words: They want me to lead them around by the nose through the story instead of creating their own stories by actively having character goals or party goals and working to accomplish them. Any suggestions you may have on drawing these guys out would be really appreciated. I mean, I can run a "lead them by the nose game" but really, what's the point in that?

—Michael Master Proactive

It sounds like your players are unused to making decisions in the game, so they don't. I get the impression that you've inherited this group or members of this group from other games—maybe games where they had a lot of DM railroading. The best way to counteract this is to retrain them. Through play, let them know that their actions have consequences and reactions. Build encounters that involve the PCs making quick

decisions with obvious and terrible consequences to others if they don't. Make encounters and decision points that don't have one obvious solution, but that involve multiple routes to degrees of success and failure. Challenge them with recurring bad guys that they desperately want to defeat, but they have to outsmart first—a bad guy who capitalizes on their unwillingness to act. In short, more instances that incent activity over reaction should do the trick. Build that, one encounter, one game, one character at a time.

Gaming Bandwidth

I'm currently playing a game on a play-by-post site. Though our DM has stated explicitly that the goal of the game is to form a Magicians' Guild, we have only got to the dungeon crawl stage.

It seems that due to my experiences as a DM, I want to explore the details of the world that seem to stand out. For example, when we came across a stone wall in the tower that an earth elemental could not walk through, I wanted to investigate. Though our DM had no problem with explanations, my fellow players get impatient and want to move on quickly.

Am I being too nit picky about the details? Or maybe I should not try to find the information we need to succeed?!

—"Hey, what's that" Jonathan

I think a big part of the problem is in the play-by-post format you are using. It's obvious that the other players want to move on to "the fun," while you've already found it. This would probably not be as big of an issue in an around-the-table game, but because playing by post can take more time than games that sit around the table, the problem is that you are chewing up bandwidth. The trick with playing in a format with a ponderous communication method is to spend more time on group activities, and less time on personal activities. So yes, in this particular instance, I think you may be a little too nitpicky about the details and you should find ways to promote activities that everyone in the group can enjoy. See if you can't deal with these details through a number of personal e-mails with your DM. You are interested, he wants to answer your questions, but see if you can't do it in a way that doesn't gobble up precious time or that hogs the spotlight.

This trick is useful in more traditional game settings as well. A player finds a book and wants to delve into its secrets or wants to have an extended talk with an NPC. That kind of stuff can be handled with phone calls and e-mail away from precious table time.

Story and Choice

I'm new to DMing and have a group of friends who would like to play each week. I've talked to them prior to doing anything and wanted to see what they enjoyed the most. In the end I've concluded they want more combat then story, but they DO want story. My problem and the reason as to why I'm emailing you is that, I have a problem with story. My question is how do I set this up? I want this to be an "open" or "free-world" where my PC's can do anything they wish. I want my players to have absolute choice, like there in a town, they can see what quests are available or they can just say, "Let's go north or south and see what we find". I guess this seems like just a task to big to handle or is it?

—Vengful Night

It's too big to handle. The trick is not to create an open world or a free world but to create the illusion of a free world. To be honest, giving your players a good number of choices is excellent, and in doing so you create the illusion of absolute choice. But, keeping it so open that you always have to catch up on your characters' wishes and actively allow changes at the drop of a dime will create a game full of stalls, confusion, and ultimately heartbreak as you quickly find that you can't get enough done in time. It's part of the DM's job to anticipate player action and to make a fun game, not to create the world from whole cloth. There will be plenty of times when your players will throw you a loop and you'll have to ad lib, but I wouldn't suggest to anyone to create an entire campaign where this was the main DMing challenge.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when Stephen Radney-MacFarland came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D, where he doesn't create the traps...he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches roleplaying game design classes at the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Get This Party Started

by James Wyatt

Last time I sketched out a campaign arc that gave me a pretty good sense of where I'm taking this campaign, from start to finish. With that big picture in place, it's time to get back down to details—the details that are immediately relevant to getting the campaign off the ground.

Home Base

First off, I'm going to put a little more thought into the village of Greenbrier. It's time to flesh it out into a lively village that can serve as a good home base for the characters, a place where they have roots, a place they care about, and a place where they can do the things that adventurers need to do between adventures. Fundamentally, it needs three things to serve as a useful home base: nonplayer characters, commerce, and story elements.

A cast of characters in town helps the village feel more real, and the characters' ties to these people help it feel like home. I'm going to sketch out the most important people in the town, starting with the authority figures, such as they are.

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* explains that a village the size of Greenbrier is usually ruled by a noble lord who doesn't live in the village and whose appointed agent is a reeve who resolves disputes and collects taxes. I'm going to alter that default assumption. Maybe Tower Watch, the nearby town to the south, used to be the seat of the local landholder, but with the fall of past empires that noble family is also long gone. Greenbrier is self-governing and its farmers own their land, making them prosperous by medieval standards—if only they didn't have to deal with monsters around them.

Dragonborn in Greenbrier

At the time that the first installment of *Dungeoncraft* was published, the dragonborn race was one of the big secrets of 4th Edition, so I didn't talk about dragonborn when I ran through the role of each race in the village. I'm going to tie them closely to dwarves in my campaign, just because the two races seem like they'd get along well, and they have much the same role in Greenbrier. Dragonborn have a strong military bent, and they often provide protective services to dwarf caravans traveling between Greenbrier and the nearby settlements. A couple of dragonborn are settled in the village, such as the priest Kharavas, as well as a pair of bodyguards working for the dwarf merchant Thadrik Boarshelm.

I said in my original notes that the common house is where the villagers gather for meetings, and I'll say now that the oldest citizen in town leads those meetings. What's interesting about that is that it's a tradition begun when Greenbrier's citizens were all human. Now the Eldest is a young elf named **Birel Stormwatcher**, a spry person of only a hundred and thirty. Her wisdom is commensurate with her years, so most of the other town elders are happy to defer to her leadership. One human elder, a crotchety woman of seventy-nine named **Marti Veran**, thinks only

human citizens should be allowed to hold the position and title of Eldest, but her opinion is not widely shared.

As far as the players in my campaign are concerned, these authority figures are important for two reasons. First, as leaders of the town, they have the authority to commission the characters to act on the town's behalf—in other words, they can give quests. Second, when conflict exists among the authority figures, they can create other adventure opportunities. What happens if Marti or someone sympathetic to her ideas tries to assassinate Eldest Birel? An adventure happens, that's what. I'll make a note now that Marti has a grandson, **Derek Veran,** who thinks his grandmother deserves to hold the title of Eldest before she dies. It's possible he's a little unbalanced and might try something crazy someday, but it might be more likely that someone truly sinister could manipulate him.

Who do the characters go to when they can't think of anyone else to ask for help?

Characters also need ways to learn things beyond the reach of their Intelligence-based skills—knowledgeable sages, counselors, scholars, and the like. There's an interesting element of either player psychology or game-group culture that probably warrants academic study: Who do the characters go to when they can't think of anyone else to ask for help? Some players always go to the temples, others look for sages, others try to talk to the baron or other noble lord, and still others canvass the taverns for the word on the street. In past campaigns, my players have tended to hit the temples first, but I still don't know who's going to be playing in my campaign, so I'm going to cover a couple of different bases.

Getting Religion

Well, my temple needs priests anyway. The priest of Bahamut in the village is **Kharavas Silverscale,** an aging dragonborn who was once an adventurer. He didn't adventure for long, but he's a rarity among village priests in that he has a few levels of cleric. He has given up the adventuring life, and he sort of resents those who have more success at it than he did, making him not particularly friendly to the player characters. If the characters can find a way past that barrier, though, they'll find him knowledgeable in religion, history, and the sort of practical knowledge covered by the Dungeoneering skill.

Kharavas is assisted in his duties by two part-time priests. These two farmers who help him with major rites on special holy days. They don't need names yet—it's enough to know that if the characters talk to Kharavas there might be, at most, one other priest of Bahamut around. These two aren't ritual casters, and they don't have a lot of information they could share with the characters.

The other full-time priest in the village temple is **Cabra Sunblessed**, a human priest of Pelor. There's a weird thing here worth watching: I mentioned in my first discussion of the village that Pelor used to be more prominent in the temple, and some people still resent the priests of Bahamut for taking over the center of the temple. But I already made a human village elder who resents the nonhuman Eldest for her position, and I made the priest of Bahamut nonhuman—putting myself at risk of duplicating that pattern. I thought about making the priest of Pelor nonhuman, but I thought it was important to have a human character the players could relate to in the temple. So I went ahead with making Cabra human, and for that reason I'm going to note that she is *not* among those who resent Bahamut's place of honor in the temple. Cabra is, in fact, the most sweet-tempered person in Greenbrier, and she is virtually incapable of holding ill will or resentment toward anyone in her heart. She's a young woman full of enthusiasm and idealism. She's also educated—she studied at the university in Silverymoon (note to self: there's a university in Silverymoon!) and is intelligent, but lacks practical experience.

So that leaves open the question of who *does* resent the promotion of Bahamut to the center of the temple. I could go in a couple of different directions with that. It could be another village elder, someone old enough to remember years before the encroaching darkness when Pelor still held that prominent position. I could consolidate a lot of resentment into the single figure of Marti Veran, but at this stage it's better to have too many stories than squash a bunch together and end up without enough. Maybe the resentful people are a group of young farmers—teenagers without farms of their own yet—who somehow got the idea in their heads that the fields are less fertile and the wilds so dangerous because Pelor is angered at the state of affairs in the village temple. That's different in an interesting way, but I don't see it tying to the themes

I've already sketched out for my campaign. I'll add it to my idea file for a later campaign.

This time around, I remember that one of my adventure hooks for getting the characters into Greenbrier Chasm for the first time involves a crazy old priest of Pelor who knows the old prophecy about the solar eclipse. This is **Jander**, who was Cabra's predecessor as priest of Pelor. He's devout and earnest—too earnest, in fact, for the people of the village. He used to harangue well-meaning farmers, telling them they weren't doing enough to stave off the encroaching darkness, and sometimes publicly berating those who had failed to show mercy and kindness to their neighbors. Finally the people of the village replaced him with Cabra, and he resents the new priest (who is far too soft on the evil in people's hearts, he thinks) as well as the priests of Bahamut. He lives in a hut just inside the village palisade and rarely ventures out of it.

The temple holds shrines to Moradin and Kord as well, but no priests earn their livelihood serving those gods. Characters who wish to offer prayers and sacrifices to those gods can do so at the shrines, or they can wait for holy days when part-time priests come in to perform the rites appropriate for those days. The priest of Moradin is also the village blacksmith, **Orin**, a brawny human man. (I'm intentionally playing against stereotype by making Moradin's priest human rather than a dwarf. I want to make sure that Moradin isn't pigeonholed into being the dwarf god in my campaign.) The priest of Kord is an old half-elf merchant named **Gredda**, who was a soldier in Silverymoon before she retired to a mercantile career. These priests, too, are neither ritual casters nor great resources for information, though Gredda in particular is a good source for the word on the street because of her merchant contacts.

Between all these priests and the two village elders I've sketched out, I think I've pretty well covered my needs for wise sources of knowledge in town, as well as sources for critical rituals (especially Cure Disease, Remove Affliction, Raise Dead). I might later want one or two more of the elders who speak up in village meetings, but I'm not going to worry about them just this moment.

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Getting Everything Else

Characters also need places in the village to buy the gear they need. Greenbrier is not a big city, nor is it crawling with adventurers, so it's not likely to have a permanent shop that sells things such as plate armor, thieves' tools, and healing potions. Those things, when they're available, come through town in merchant caravans heading to or from Silverymoon. That doesn't mean I can't put faces to those transactions, though—the large merchant houses that operate those caravans have permanent agents in Greenbrier.

The most important agent here is **Thadrik Boarshelm**, a dwarf merchant connected with the dwarf-run Moonsword Trading House based in Silverymoon. Thadrik is easily the richest resident of Greenbrier, and he is never seen in public without his two dragonborn bodyguards. He boasts that he can find anything for anyone, for the right price, and he's eager to serve adventurers (who are so often flush with ready cash). He's the most likely source for any exotic items the characters want to buy.

One agent is sufficient to meet the characters' needs, but two agents means competition and conflict, which holds the potential for adventure. I've already mentioned Gredda, the retired soldier, priest of Kord, and merchant. She's associated with a rival trading house based out of Lake Town, called Brindinford Shipping (in a nod to the town featured in *The Speaker in Dreams*). Brindinford Shipping is smaller than the Moonsword house, and it's harder for Gredda to get most of the kinds of items that adventurers want. I want to think more about whether there are some reasons the characters might want to deal with her instead of Thadrik—a competitive advantage that isn't immediately obvious.

Orin the blacksmith makes mostly farm implements and horseshoes, but times being what they are, he's also pretty good at forging weapons and simpler forms of armor. I'm going to say he has an apprentice, **Tarma**, who specializes in armor, though characters might still want to buy plate armor from Thadrik or Gredda. And there's a dwarf smith in the village, **Harak**, who specializes in weapons but also does more elaborate metalwork.

I don't want characters routinely buying and selling magic items in my campaign—that's a matter of personal taste, but fortunately the game supports that decision. Thadrik or Gredda might secure specific magic items for the characters before they can use the Enchant Magic Item ritual, or buy unwanted items from them, but I want that to be the exception rather than the rule. At any rate, there's no "magic item shop" in Greenbrier.

Greenbrier's Story

I've already made some steps toward outlining the stories that could escalate into adventures within the village—the resentful Elder Veran (and her grandson), the crazy prophet of Pelor, the competing merchant houses. There are two things I need to add at this point: story hooks for player character backgrounds and story hooks for my campaign arc.

If I were creating Greenbrier for a published book, akin to the town of Fallcrest that Rich Baker designed for the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, I would put a lot of time into PC background hooks. I'd make sure that every race and every class had a selection of interesting hooks, similar to what's on pages 208–209 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Because I'm designing Greenbrier for my own campaign, though, I don't need to do that. I just need to make sure that my players' characters have hooks in the village, and that's work that's best done with the players' cooperation. This is the first and best opportunity the players have to take some ownership in my campaign, which is something I definitely want to encourage.

When I talk about story hooks for the characters, I mean anything I can use to connect the characters to adventures in my campaign. Any connection between a player character and an NPC, a site, or an object in the world of my campaign is a potential hook, because I can lead that character into adventure by threatening or otherwise employing that connection. That doesn't have to be as heavy-handed as saying, "Goblins have kidnapped your mother!" A connection to an NPC is a tie to all the things that motivate that NPC.

What if Derek Veran (Marti's grandson) is a friend and colleague of one of the PCs? If he decides to act to get his grandmother the position he thinks she deserves, the PC has an interest in that event. If something happens to Birel and Marti is implicated, Derek might come to his PC friend for help.

I have my notes from the first installment about what role the different races play in Greenbrier, and I'll keep those in mind as I'm working with players to create background hooks. But the most important thing is the players' interests and desires for their characters.

I don't have a group of players yet, so I'm not going to do this work yet. By way of example, though, say my son Carter wants to play a dragonborn warlord.

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Well, I suggested earlier in this article that dragonborn often work as caravan guards, particularly for the dwarves of the Moonsword Trading House. That would be fitting work for a young warlord-in-training, but what if it doesn't appeal to Carter? He wants to be a historian, scouring the countryside for ancient dragonborn ruins. Well, that's conducive to adventure, so we're going to run with it. Perhaps one of his parents (or an uncle) is one of Thadrik's bodyguards, so he calls Greenbrier home. Maybe the dungeons in Greenbrier Chasm—or at least the upper levels—are of dragonborn construction. Just like that, Carter's character has a new reason to explore my first dungeon.

Looking back over my notes about my campaign arc, the one last thing I think Greenbrier needs is a hint of the presence of the Topaz Order. Of all the anti-aberration organizations in *Lords of Madness*, that was the one I felt was most likely to have direct influence in Greenbrier. It's an order of holy knights that venerates Bahamut, Moradin, and Pelor, and it is dedicated to protecting the civilized races from aberrations.

I'm walking a bit of a fine line, here. On the one hand, I want to put this organization into the players' minds pretty early on in the campaign—it foreshadows the campaign's biggest themes, and I hope that some characters want to formally join the Order by the time they hit the paragon tier. On the other hand, I don't want a powerful NPC in town who has every reason to do the PCs' jobs for them. If the Depravation is spreading out from Greenbrier Chasm, why would a knight of the Topaz Order sit by and watch as inexperienced adventurers delve into the chasm, messing with forces they don't understand?

What Greenbrier really needs, then, is an *absent* knight of the Topaz Order—someone who disappeared

into Greenbrier Chasm years ago, leaving in the possession of his or her loved ones a treasured golden holy symbol of Bahamut with a topaz eye. Best of all, those loved ones might include one of the PCs. The character might treasure the symbol as a memento of her father, not knowing its significance. It's yet another good hook into Greenbrier Chasm, and a tie to the Topaz Order down the line as well.

Extras

One thing I didn't do very well in my initial list of NPCs in Greenbrier was to make sure that all the core races were represented. Filling out the list with some halflings, shifters, and eladrin, as well as a few other characters that come to mind as I go, wraps up this first pass at adding to the cast of characters in the village.

Elder Haander Riverswell is the unofficial leader of the halfling community in Greenbrier, and he tends to speak for the halflings in village meetings.

Watchwarden Sherra is a shifter who leads patrols of the boundary between the farms and the wilderness. She's a skilled tracker and naturalist, and can serve as a resource for information about the wilderness and surrounding lands.

I left the eladrin story unfinished on my initial pass through Greenbrier using the *Player's Handbook* races, so it's time at last to come back to that. I've decided that the forest where the elves lived was burned to the ground when the fiery aberration imprisoned at the bottom of Greenbrier Chasm escaped. I had suggested before that the forest was a "thin place" between the worlds, and the elves of the forest and the eladrin of the Feywild mingled frequently. It seems to me that the passage of a creature as powerful as this aberration would have an impact beyond just the mortal world, so I'm going to say that the eladrin community in the Feywild was also destroyed, sending refugees in both directions—elsewhere into the Feywild, and to Greenbrier.

With that established, I'll invent an eladrin noble-in-exile, **Ramynaria**. She's proud and aloof, clinging to the tatters of the noble title she carried decades ago.

The last thing Greenbrier needs right now is a "captain of the guard" figure. The village doesn't have any standing military, so it relies entirely on citizen militia for its defense, but there has to be a face to that militia with which the characters can interact. That's **Thom Martais**, a bear of a farmer who is responsible for calling, training, and commanding the militia when the need arises.

Here's a quick summary of the cast of characters I developed for Greenbrier:

- Eldest Birel Stormwatcher (female elf), leads town meetings
- Elder Marti Veran (female human), pro-human (resents Birel)
- Elder Haander Riverswell (male halfling)
- Derek Veran (male human), grandson of Marti
- Kharavas Silverscale (male dragonborn), priest of Bahamut and retired cleric
- Cabra Sunblessed (female human), priest of Pelor
- Orin (male human), blacksmith and part-time priest of Moradin
- Tarma (female human), blacksmith's apprentice and armorer
- Gredda (female half-elf), merchant of Brindinford Shipping and part-time priest of Kord
- Jander (male human), old prophet-priest of Pelor
- Thadrik Boarshelm (male dwarf), merchant of the Moonsword Trading House
- Harak (male dwarf), weaponsmith
- Watchwarden Sherra (female shifter)
- Ramynaria (female eladrin), noble-in-exile
- Thom Martais (male human), militia leader

Next time, I'll talk about how to keep all this information organized and how to present it to the players as the campaign gets going. ⚔

About the Author

James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, *City of the Spider Queen*, and *Oriental Adventures*. His more recent works include *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*, *Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave*, and *The Forge of War*. His second Eberron novel, *Storm Dragon*, was released in 2007.

SEPULCHRAL CAVERN OF THE DRACOLICH
1. Overlook
2. The Shadowfell Gate
3. Natural Cavern
4. Bed of Bones
5. Hoard Cave
6. Waterfalls from Ancient Necropolis
7. Stone Bridges
8. Blood Amethyst Caverns
9. Tainted River
10. Sentry Cave
11. Ledge down to the Vale of Fallen Wyrms
12. Ledge up to Ancient Necropolis
1 square = 15 feet
WEST